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ACCENT

A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE

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EDGAR JOHNSON:

George Bernard Shaw: Argument and Casuistry in Satire

"No man," Baron Guilford was fond of observing, "could be a good lawyer that was not a put-case." This is a definition of casuistry, for casuistry consists of nothing else but the invention and posing of cases to prove a point. It also defines the essential method of most argument in satire; every satiric fiction implicitly strives to bring home to its victims the indictment *De te fabula.* Whether or not the "argument" posed by the choice of cases is casuistical in the narrower, reproachful sense of the word depends upon the degree to which sophistical manipulation is involved. What is true of the whole is true of its parts; each individual section puts a part of the case which stands or falls in terms not only of its own apparent integrity but of its relationship to the whole.

All satire is thus a kind of argument, an endeavor to convince by chosen instances, although often enough it remains merely argument by assertion. On occasion, however, it adopts the specific devices of argumentation, driving through to a conclusion, sometimes even debating and endeavoring to batter down the opposition. Such satire purports to make its appeal to reason rather than to primitive feeling. It marshals evidence, invokes a process of proof. This aspect of satire is the theme of this essay; the satirist as dialectician. George Bernard Shaw, as one of those satirists who have relied preeminently upon such methods, will be used to illustrate the technique of polemical satire. No principles, of course, can be established on the basis of a single example. But what is insufficient to prove a principle may nevertheless be fruitful in suggestion. *

* Note by the editors: The present essay is a section of a longer treatment of argument and casuistry as satiric methods, which forms a chapter from Mr. Johnson's almost completed book entitled AN ANALYSIS OF SATIRE.

Like Dickens, only even more consistently than Dickens, Shaw is a social satirist. But Dickens crusaded against the evils of the nineteenth century like a bull stamping and goring in his rage; Shaw, by contrast, must be seen as the *torero.* Where Dickens rushes headlong on a hated foe, Shaw remains agile and self-possessed in the center of the arena. Where Dickens grows hot and angry, Show is icicle-cool. Icicle-glittering, too, with a cerebral wit like sun upon a glacier. Its light, however, is no reflection from a frozen waste, but the play of a clear and darting mind delighting in its dominance and ease. Proudly it places its *banderillos,* hardly seeming to stir; there is a flurry of red cloak and the plunging victim is then ready to be teased, maddened, manipulated again, ultimately worn down and dispatched, always with serene control and style.

Shaw has spent a lifetime goading the bull of middle-class public opinion, but the comparison with Dickens was no mere excuse for our metaphor. Dickens is a part of Shaw's artistic ancestry. There is much Dickens in his comic figures: Enry Straker, for example, the Cockney chauffeur of *Man and Superman;* Candida's father, Burgess, with his low cunning and whining, sanctimonious cant; William, the comic waiter of *You Never Can Tell*; and Doolittle, the philosophical dustman in *Pygmalion.* When the last two of these are on the stage Sam Weller is never far around the corner. Even Shaw's naming of characters often reminds us of Dickens—Smilash, Aloysia Brollikens, Lickcheese, Sir Fuller Eastwind, Sir Dexter Rightside (compare Noodle, Mrs. Jellyby, Lord Frederic Verisopht, Sir Leicester Deadlock). Like Dickens, too, Shaw is fond of slapstick and knockabout farce, such as Edstaston's being tickled by the Empress of Russia in *Great Catherine* and the comic pantomime lion of *Androcles.* But burlesque with Shaw is a subordinate device, partly mere high jinks and partly coating for his didactic pills.

For the truth is, of course, that Shaw has always been an intellectual moralist assaulting the public with a steady stream of arguments, whether they were poured forth as reviews, novels, pamphlets, plays, or torrential prefaces. Argument, conducted with all the acumen of a born debater and sometimes with the tricky ingenuity of a skilled casuist, has been the staple of his attack. And that attack has been direct and undisguised, escaping reprisal only by a mingling of insolence, high spirits, wit, and flashing paradox that has often led to his being mistaken for a playboy with mental fireworks. The technique of satiric argument is thus brilliantly exemplified in Shaw, both because he illustrates it so purely and because he employs it in so many forms —essay, narrative, Socratic dialogue, oration, symposium, drama. In Shaw's formal versatility he is certainly the Voltaire of our age.

Let us analyze the technique of the following paragraph from *Saint Joan*:

> Our credulity, though enormous, is not boundless; and our stock of it is quite used up by our mediums, clairvoyants, hand readers, slate writers, Christian Scientists, psychoanalysts, electronic vibration diviners, therapeutists of all schools registered and unregistered, astrologers, astronomers who tell us that the sun is nearly a hundred

> million miles away and that Betelgeuse is ten times as big as the whole universe, physicists who balance Betelgeuse by describing the incredible smallness of the atom, and a host of other marvel mongers whose credulity would have dissolved the Middle Ages in a roar of sceptical merriment. In the Middle Ages people believed that the earth was flat, for which they had at least the evidence of their senses: we believe it to be round, not because as many as one per cent of us could give the physical reasons for so quaint a belief, but because modern science has convinced us that nothing that is obvious is true, and that everything that is magical, improbable, extraordinary, gigantic, microscopic, heartless, or outrageous is scientific.

It would be hard to overpraise the wit and skill of this, the long but swift oratorical clauses effortlessly scooping up so many details in their course, ingeniously maneuvering a host of contemporary credulities into such prominence that our claims to scepticism collapse in feeble ruin, no less ingeniously carrying with their weight a number of other modern concepts in which Shaw seeks to weaken our faith, and finally exploding in a spectacular antithesis that has the effect of a cracking epigrammatic whip. How much, by sheer virtuosity and joy in destruction, has Shaw persuaded us to swallow here, of which we might otherwise have been dubious?

He begins with a core of indubitable fact. None except their votaries will deny him the astrologers, palmists, mediums, clairvoyants, and Christian Science faith healers. Then, slily inserted among these, come others, more disturbing to our complacency. We laughed very willingly at those foolish enough to believe in the slate writers and "electronic vibration diviners," but are we sure that we can draw the dividing line between fashionable medical quacks and legitimate practitioners? that we know how much is science and how much is hocus-pocus in psychoanalysis? When he attacks our faith in the infinitesimal world of the electron and the light-years between the stars, we may begin to smile; surely it's all a joke! surely these are respectable, not credulous, beliefs! Incredible to suppose a conspiracy among so many scientific students of unimpeachable integrity. But all the greatest doctors and authorities of the day, Shaw responds, gave the mediaeval man equally good reason for believing in angels and witchcraft. But our mechanical inventions, we protest; the telephone, the radio! And Shaw cruelly replies, could you yourselves make the faintest stab at showing how they employ the scientific principles you believe them to prove? And, if not, what claim have you to anything but faith?

Shaw does not, of course, mean that there is no foundation for the statements made by scientists. He is merely showing that the average man flatters himself if he believes that he is enlightened and sceptical. He lives in a world of intellectual wonders without being much less of an ignorant fool than his ancestors. In a single paragraph, then, Shaw has swung us through a great circle of reactions. We began with a patronizing giggle at our mental inferiors, then laughed at Shaw for throwing out a wild paradox to tickle us, and then, suddenly, found ourselves bumped down off our pedestal of imagined superiority.

Shaw's denial of received opinion was not a piece of intellectual clowning,

but the simple truth in fantastic guise. And this is the prevailing characteristic of Shaw's wit. It is the prevailing characteristic, in fact, of all wit, which is preeminently a sane revelation of reality. Nothing, then, could be further from the truth than Max Beerbohm's caricature of Shaw standing on his head and exclaiming how ridiculous the world looks from that angle. It is conventional muddle that is really standing on its head.

Shaw's achievement, technically, in his pamphlets and prefaces, is that by remarkable ingenuity in construction he is able to arrange his argument in a continuous sequence of reversal, surprise, paradox, and witty *reductio ad absurdum.* Through a barrage of lively humor, browbeating, exaggeration, and abuse, he pushes on his objectives with a steady penetration and sanity, and with such infectious high spirits and freedom from malice that even when he is being most outrageous the reader finds himself taken captive. Observe, for example, how in the paragraph immediately following the one we have analyzed, under the pretense of taking back some of it he then makes his attack even more sweeping:

> I must not, by the way, be taken as implying that the earth is flat, or that all or any of our amazing credulities are delusions or impostures. I am only defending my own age against the charge of being less imaginative than the Middle Ages. I affirm that the nineteenth century, and still more the twentieth, can knock the fifteenth into a cocked hat in point of susceptibility to marvels and miracles and saints and prophets and magicians and monsters and fairy tales of all kinds. The proportion of marvel to immediately credible statement in the latest edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica is enormously greater than in the Bible. The medieval doctors of divinity who did not pretend to settle how many angels could dance on the point of a needle cut a very poor figure as far as credulity is concerned beside the modern physicists who have settled to the billionth of a millimetre every movement and position in the dance of the electrons. Not for worlds would I question the precise accuracy of these calculations or the existence of electrons (whatever they may be). The fate of Joan is a warning to me against such heresy. But why the men who believe in electrons should regard themselves as less credulous than the men who believed in angels is not apparent to me.

The mingling of jest, seriousness, hyperbole, common sense, irony, and cheek in this passage adds up to a heady intoxication that does much to explain the secret of Shaw's charm. Gaily smashing through the barriers of so many conventional beliefs and restrictions, making ridiculous the guardians of so many intellectual as well as moral respectabilities, he appeals to a hidden chafing against restraint within us and offers us the freedom and exhilaration of a wider and less hidebound world. If it then turns out that we have not merely been kicking up our heels in an irresponsible canter, but that this freer world is saner too, what wonder that Shaw is able to cajole, push, swear, and convince us into more than we had ever conceived possible?

Shaw is an expert at hoisting the enemy with his own petard. It is still a pleasure to read his essay, *The Sanity of Art,* demolishing Nordau's argu-

ment that modern art—the art of Ibsen, Wagner, and Monet—was a form of degenerate lunacy and its practitioners the victims of various phobias and manias. There is one amusing example of the *tu quoque*: Let us summon Nordau himself, Shaw suggests, "before the looking-glass," and ask him whether "he can pick out a crank more hopelessly obsessed with one idea than himself."

> If you want an example of echolalia, can you find a more shocking one than this gentleman who, when you say "mania," immediately begins to gabble Egomania, Graphomania, Megalomania, Onomatomania, Pyromania, Kleptomania, Dipsomania, Erotomania, Arithmomania, Oniomania, and is started off by the termination "phobia" with a string of Agoraphobia, Claustrophobia, Rupophobia, Iophobia, Nosophobia, Aichmophobia, Belenophobia, Cremnophobia, and Trichophobia? After which he suddenly observes: "This is simply philologico-medical trifling," a remark which looks like returning sanity until he follows it up by clasping his temples in the true bedlamite manner, and complaining that "psychiatry is being stuffed with useless and disturbing designations," whereas, if the psychiatrists would only listen to him, they would see that there is only one phobia and one mania: namely, degeneration. That is, the philologico-medical triflers are not crazy enough for him.

It is noteworthy that Shaw often employs a technique very similar to that of these long harangues in his plays. The action may have been broad farce, brisk repartee, or sharp intellectual conflict, but again and again at a certain stage, as the issues clarify themselves, one of the characters rises to a long speech of musical eloquence. There are Don Juan, the Devil, and the Commander, in *Man and Superman,* with their increasingly patterned counterpoint soaring to Don Juan's Life-Force speech; the Inquisitor's magnificent oration in *Saint Joan*; the King's speech to his Cabinet, in *The Apple Cart*: "I stand for the great abstractions: for conscience and virtues; for the eternal against the expedient; for the evolutionary appetite against the day's gluttony"; the melancholy valedictory of the preacher-burglar in *Too True to Be Good,* while the rising fog thickens round him from the sea: "All I know is that I must find the way of life, for myself and all of us, or we shall surely perish. And meanwhile my gift has possession of me: I must preach and preach no matter how late the hour and how short the day. . ."

The comparison of these great set-pieces to musical compositions was not accidental. Einstein remarks that Shaw's plays are like Mozart's music; and Shaw himself insists that he learned his art not from the writers but the composers: "My masters were the masters of a universal language; they were, to go from summit to summit, Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner." How revealingly the development of an entire act in one of Shaw's plays may be analyzed in terms of musical structure is shown by Edmund Wilson's discussion of the orchestration of *The Apple Cart's* first act. That delightful operatic extravaganza, *Arms and the Man,* achieves the same result in the clear thematic contrast between the Byronesque heroics of Sergius

and the good-humoredly ironic deflations of Bluntschli. In other plays one instrument is played off against all the others, or a whole series is made to develop characteristic variations on a single theme, or (as in *Saint Joan*, with Cauchon, Warwick, the Inquisitor, and Joan) all state their own themes, which are then developed and amplified in conflict.

"This music," Wilson concludes, "is a music of ideas—or rather, perhaps, it is a music of moralities. Bernard Shaw is a writer of the same kind as Plato." He is indeed; and if with Plato he sometimes makes his other characters nothing more than foils to his intellectual hero, even oftener he rises like Plato to a philosophic drama in which points of view are given life and brought into genuine conflict with each other, in which the excitement is that of a keen and revelatory dialectic. At its best the intellectual movement is constant and widens over a broadening field of illumination. If in *Man and Superman* Octavius, Ramsden, and Malone are all dummies to be disposed of by Tanner's verbal jiu jitsu, and the bandit Mendoza an operatic prig, the symposium of the Dream-scene is genuine and the Commander, Ana, and the Devil are not mere setups for Don Juan. Although Shaw makes a ludicrous figure of Tom Broadbent, the conflict of *John Bull's Other Island* is real, and so is that between Major Barbara and Andrew Undershaft, and that in the symbolism of *Heartbreak House,* where Captain Shotover voices their antagonism to the Boss Mangans of the world: "We must win powers of life and death over them . . . There is enmity between our seed and their seed . . . We kill the better half of ourselves every day to propitiate them."

Shaw's strength, also like Plato's, lies not merely in his wit and felicity of language or the structural symmetry with which he develops his themes, but in the central harmony of his thought. His entire career has been a search for a philosophy that might provide a foundation both for understanding and action in modern society, essentially a religious search for the emotional force behind intelligent action. All the resources of his art have been for Shaw only an instrument of that purpose: "for art's sake alone I would not face the toil of writing a single sentence." Indeed, for Shaw, he himself is only an instrument: "This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

"There is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good for the world." So, Keats; and Shaw's manifesto is a ringing affirmation of the same thought. But the great inspirations of Shaw's earlier career were not the poets, not even Shelley or William Morris, but Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* and Marx's *Das Kapital.* "Karl Marx," he said, "made a man of me"; and although he has not adhered to a rigorous Marxism he has never foregone its illuminations. Sidney Trefusis, the hero of *An Unsocial Socialist,* shows his guests photographs of his town house and country estate, his magnificent library, his formal gardens, the paintings in his art gallery, and just

as they are uneasily thinking to themselves what a vulgar bounder he is to be boasting of his possessions, produces photographs of the sweatshops and industrial slums from which his and their wealth is derived. *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is an analysis of the social causes of prostitution. "The notion that prostitution is created by the wickedness of Mrs. Warren is as silly as the notion—prevalent, nevertheless, to some extent in Temperance circles—that drunkenness is created by the wickedness of the publican." *Widowers' Houses* shows "that slums are the product, not of individual Harpagons, but of the indifference of young gentlemen to the condition of the city they live in, provided they live at the west end of it on money earned by somebody else's labor."

The economic foundation becomes less obvious in later plays; it does not disappear. *Heartbreak House* "is cultured, leisured Europe before the War," and in it every one of the characters corresponds to part of a symbolic social analysis. Captain Shotover, once merchant, adventurer, pirate, and imperialist, represents the British tradition since the time of Drake and Raleigh. He is the energy that seized the Americas, India, Australia. But now, drunk and half-crazy, in a house built in the form of a ship (like England riding the waves, like the mercantile sources of England's wealth), his energies are feeble and senescent. The present generation spends its energies in gossip, scandal, novel-reading, game-shooting, art, music, snobbery, love-making, and ennui; it is too disillusioned to believe in anything and too fond of luxury and too undisciplined to work for anything. Those who still cultivate a sense of responsibility (Lady Utterword and "Horseback Hall") are too tied up in the traditions of caste, riding to hounds, and the playing fields of Eton to make their administration of England's colonial empire anything but a blunder and a waste. Mazzini Dunn represents what is left of nineteenth century liberalism, pallid, well-meaning, and washed-out, shrunk to a catspaw of finance capitalism, symbolized in Boss Mangan, whose factories he manages and whose workmen he conciliates. His daughter, Ellie Dunn, is the younger generation. But, unlike Ibsen's Nora or Hilda Wangel, she will slam no doors nor knock at them with high impossible demands. She is a daughter of the jazz age, lacking in all faith and certainty, sick with a half-hearted selfish romanticism turned toward the matinee-idol profile of the dashing Hector Hushabye, and at the same time gnawed by an incipient cynicism that will allow her to sell herself in matrimony to the fat and middle-aged Mangan.

It is emptiness of faith that runs through the world Shaw is here depicting, and it is a faith that may give man an unselfish and intelligent purpose that Shaw has spent his life in seeking. *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah* are efforts to find that faith in a doctrine of evolution striving toward a form of life that will be self-understanding and self-directing, not the mere creature of chance. "Were I not possessed with a purpose beyond my own I had better be a ploughman than a philosopher; for the ploughman lives as long as the philosopher, eats more, sleeps better, and rejoices in the wife of his bosom with less misgiving." But to the philosopher the Life-

Force says: "I have done a thousand wonderful things unconsciously by merely willing to live and following the line of least resistance: now I want to know myself and my destination, and choose my path; so I have made a special brain—a philosopher's brain—to grasp this knowledge for me . . . And this thou must strive to do until thou diest, when I will make another brain and another philosopher to carry on the work."

This is the ringing clarity of Shaw's prime. Its value and courage are not lessened by the fact that in our distraught world of today Shaw's weakening powers are reflected in the troubled questionings, despair, and doubt of *Too True to Be Good* and *On the Rocks*. It may be necessary, however, to defend Shaw's central consistency against the vigorous criticism of Edmund Wilson, who feels that even in the richest and most vital part of Shaw's career there is, despite all the clearness of individual pronouncements, a certain blurring and confusion of essential thought. There is a vein of everyday commonsense practicality in Shaw, Wilson argues, that conflicts with the socialist vision of a reorganized society, and beyond the socialist scheme of ideal values, in turn, Shaw the poet-philosopher "commands a longer view of life *sub specie aeternitatis* and . . . allows himself many doubts which neither the socialist nor the bourgeois citizen can admit." Out of these conflicts comes Shaw's gift of identifying himself, as playwright, with contrary emotions and points of view; but out of them also come inward contradictions that muddle his position.

There are, of course, contradictory utterances in Shaw, as there are in anyone who writes and talks much. But in the main his position is transparently consistent and clear; and what seem to Wilson contradictions are only the careful warnings with which an intelligent man must qualify most absolute statements. The moralist denounces marriage, but advises young people to conform; true, but he is striving to induce thought that may lead to a change in social mores and at the same time to caution those who have no vocation for rebellion or sainthood that the field of action is probably not for them. The political observer points out that we cannot dismiss the dictators as tricky madmen predestined to ultimate failure—and surely, by now, it must be clear that not all our horror of Hitler can dispose of him by calling him, as Wilson does, "merely a crazy Austrian." Shaw's remarks on Mussolini and Hitler, and on Lenin and Stalin, have the force of bidding the democracies look to their course lest they perish. Nor is there contradiction in having a reform program for the present that one does not regard as binding for all future time. So sane a thinker as John Stuart Mill came to feel representative democracy not as an absolute principle but as a political instrument without being any less "a radical and a democrat for Europe, and especially for England," in his own time.

Shaw's ultimate vision of the boundless possibilities of human expansion, his ideal of sanity, orderliness, and a rational fullness in life, are unified, passionate, and clear. If he is open to criticism, it is rather for a certain thin, cerebral quality, especially noticeable in the sexless flavor of his delineation of love between men and women. Trotsky hit this off when he wished, in a

passage quoted by Wilson, that "the Fabian fluid that ran in [his] veins" might have been "strengthened by even so much as five percent of the blood of Jonathan Swift."* Not that there is no indignation or scorn in Shaw. He has none of Swift's macabre bitterness, however, because he lives more purely in the mind than Swift and because he has been filled with boundless confidence.

Shaw has been one of the great intellectual irritants of our day. His satire has been a sword cutting through innumerable thick swaddlings of convention. His iconoclastic arguments and the glitter of their logic have for over a generation been clearing minds of their confusion, raising in the most dazzling forms the most vital questions. The answers have not always, perhaps, been the right answers, but the questions have almost always been right questions. People no longer "raise the fool's cry of paradox" when Shaw takes "hold of the stick by the right instead of the wrong end." And it is neither his verbal wit nor his charm that has given his arguments and questions force. That force lies in the core of values they have consistently maintained.

Satire is warfare. In that war, invective is the hand-grenade, poison-gas bomb, and flame-thrower. When it hits, it mutilates, chokes, and sears. Exaggeration is anti-enemy propaganda, more effective at home or on the neutral than on the foe—although sometimes a plausible smear, if he glimpse it, may weaken his faith in himself. Argument is artillery. If its projectiles are heavy enough and fired with unceasing energy it is possible for them to batter through armor plate. Irony and symbolism undermine the enemy position and interpenetrate his territory with disguised troops and secret agents.

No satirist, then, not even Shaw, uses argument as his only weapon. But Shaw, Aldous Huxley, Samuel Butler, Thorstein Veblen, and many others use it heavily; Thomas Love Peacock, Lewis Carroll, Aristophanes, pepper their victims with constant arrow-flights of argument. The techniques of satiric argument so brilliantly illustrated by Shaw cannot give other satirists things to say. They can, however, teach a great deal about how to say them. Shaw's prefaces and pamphlets show how satire can be suffused throughout an entire argument and how ridicule can be built into a series of miniature climaxes. His best plays embody conflicting attitudes and philosophies and use their clash to highlight now one and now another aspect of a complex situation. His wit is not verbal nor even a succession of local lightning flashes; it bathes the entire scene in intellectual surprises, dialectical defeats, and startling argumentative victories: they are structures of musical logic built with superb craftsmanship. They integrate thought and feeling, proving that the crucial question for all technique is: technique to what end? The harmony between what Shaw has to say and his means of saying it makes him a powerful lesson in the relation of the two for all satirists.

* Edwin Arlington Robinson touches on the same point when he complains in a letter that Shaw is a mixture of "red rags and white corpuscles."

WALTER VAN TILBURG CLARK:

The Rapids

Where the unpaved road curved over the top of the hill and descended to the river, a man appeared, walking by himself. He was thin and wore spectacles, and his legs, when they showed through the flapping wings of his red and blue dressing gown, were very white. He carried a towel in one hand. Walking carefully, for his slippers were thin, he came down between the fir trees, then between the alders and the willows, and stood at the edge of the river.

Four terraces of red rock lay diagonally across the river at this point, but they were tilted away from him so that the heavy water gushed all on the farther side, and narrowed until from the lowest ledge it jetted forth in a single head, making a big, back-bellying bubble rimmed with foam in the pool below. Closer to him eddies from the main stream came over the terraces at intervals, making thin, transparent falls a foot or two high. Swarms of midget flies danced against these falls, keeping just free of the almost invisible mist which blew from them.

Climbing cautiously from the bank to the rocks, the man walked out on the second terrace, which was the broadest and had a gentle incline. He bent over and felt of the rock. It was warm with sun. He took off his dressing gown and sat down. Then he fished in the pocket of the gown, drew out a piece of soap, and put it beside the towel. Finally he pulled off his slippers and placed them on the edge of the towel to hold it down if the wind blew. After this preparation he sat with his arms around his knees and stared at the running water.

The sun felt good on his back. He wondered if he dared to remove his shorts; but the bridge from his road lay across the river close above him so he decided not to. Also there was a building on the opposite bank at the point where the river jumped out into the pool. There were only two and a half walls of the building standing, and the windows had been out of those for a long time. Vines grew over the gray-tan stones and into the windows, and nothing was left of the roof. Still it was a building, four stories high. So he kept on his shorts and sat in the sun and looked at the building, remembering the bit of its history he had heard. It had been a mill, way back towards the days of the Revolution. Since then this part of the country had failed. There were only small, poor farms in it now, and the remnants of villages. It gave him a queer feeling to look right through the empty windows and see trees growing inside, and the steep, green bank behind them. The ruin was old for America. He was used to seeing empty mills that weren't ten years old. This went a long way back.

After a time the draft in the river canyon felt chilly in spite of the sun. The man removed his spectacles with both hands, placed them on his dressing gown, picked up the cake of soap, and approached the closest of the little falls.

Standing beside it, with his feet in the shallow basin of turning water, he shivered before the breath of the river. Timidly he began to wash, laving his forearms and the back of his neck, determinedly splashing a palmful of water over his white chest and belly. Encouraged, he wet himself all over and rubbed on the soap vigorously, ducking his head into the fall and working up a great lather on it, like a shining white wig. When he was well soaped he couldn't open his eyes. Feeling for the rim of the fall, he moved gingerly, for the basin was slimy. Having come close enough, he squatted under the fall and let it drive the soap down from him until he could open his eyes and see the iridescent trail of the soap, like an oil mark, draining away from him down the gutter of rock. All this time he moved his arms as much as he dared because the water was cold.

Back out in the sun he realized that he would have to do more. He had been too cramped in the basin, and much of his body was still greasy with soap. He walked carefully down the terrace towards the pool, gripping the stone with his toes, for his wet feet were uncertain. They left a trail of increasingly perfect tracks from the small puddle where he had stood beside his dressing gown to the last print at the edge of the terrace, which showed each toe faintly but distinctly, and the ball, the arch, and the heel—clearly a man's foot.

After hesitating, he let himself down over the edge until the cool water was about his shins. Then he stood on slimy stone like that in the basin. On all fours he moved slowly, crab-wise, along this submerged ledge, and slid off into deeper water. This was at the center of the pool, and the water was quiet, moved only by a side flow circling the pool from the falls, and occasionally by a light ripple of wind along the surface. Awkwardly, and with some splashing, he rubbed himself under water until the last slickness of soap was gone and his hands adhered to his thighs. Then he paddled aimlessly in the pool for a few minutes, treading water and observing himself below. His arms and legs appeared dwarfed and misshapen, his hands and feet immense and square. All of him that was under water looked yellow, and was hairy with particles of the slime he had stirred getting in. Altogether he was a much more powerful and formidable man, seen through the tidal glass of the pool. He began to feel adventurous.

He noticed that the green darkness of the pool paled on the side across from the ledges. A sub-aqueous, changeable gold was visible there under the black surface-reflection of the forest on the hill. He paddled towards it, keeping his head above water and feeling before him with his hands. When he came to rest, balanced on his hands, he was on a sunken sand-bar—the dam which made the pool. The sand was coarse and white, and felt clean to his touch after the scum in the basin and on the ledge. Letting his feet down, he planted them firmly and walked up the incline of the sand-bar, feeling himself emerge into gusty air. At last he was on top, the water ankle-deep. Looking down from this eminence, he saw a boat farther along the ridge of the bar. It lay bottom up, and was so water-logged that it had ground into the sand until no part of it but the very center of the bottom was above water. Now and then a wind ripple passed over even that.

The man was excited by the discovery. He waded to the boat and attempted to turn it right side up. But the vacuum under it, or simply its weight, held it solid. He was angered, and put forth all his thin might in repeated efforts, standing between tries to breathe deeply and let the blood subside from his head. At the best of his efforts the boat rocked, and straining he raised the gunwale as far as his knee. This encouraged him; but when he lifted again the boat came no higher, and then remained passively immovable. He had to let it fall back into the water, where it rolled lightly, splashing around its shape like a stubborn live thing, run aground but insisting upon its element. The man's feet had been driven down into the sand until he could not lift well from his position. Freeing himself, he climbed onto the crest of the bar again and stood with his legs apart, glaring at the boat. He considered leaving it and relinquishing himself to placid floating in the pool, whence he could eye the useless boat disdainfully. But when the blood in his temples ceased pounding, he had a cunning thought. Moving down into the water until he was on the other side of the boat, he slid it backwards off the bar. Once it floated free, he could get his shoulder under it. This stratagem succeeded; the boat rolled bulkily over, sending out a wave which broke on the interference of the sand-bar. "That fixes you," the man said aloud.

However, the water in the boat was level with the water in the pool. Only a portion of the prow and of the square stern protruded. The man found that tilting the boat let in as much water as it let out. He took hold on a chain at the prow and drew the boat onto the crest of the bar. It followed him with lumbering unwillingness. On the bar a great deal more of it stood above water, and by teetering it fore and aft he drove several belches of water out over the stern. Still the boat would not rise. The man climbed into it and began to scoop with both hands. The water flew in silver sheets, spread into silver drops, and splattered on the pool; but more of it fell through his hands than went overboard. He stood up and looked around. On a flat rock at the west edge of the pool there sat a shining two-quart tin can. He clambered out of the boat, went down into the water, paddled industriously across, hoisted himself up the irregular rock steps, and procured the can.

Shortly he had all but an inch or two of water out of the boat. That persisted because of three little leaks, through which he could see minute streams gliding steadily. He pushed the boat, with the can in it, off the sand-bar, and kicking noisily, propelled it to shore. Here he pulled grass and made small wads of it, with the heads standing up in tufts. These plugged the leaks quite effectively, and the man began to hum to himself while he bailed out the last water.

The boat, clumsy and flat-bottomed, with two bowed planks forming each side, had been battered down stream in the flood of the spring rains. Much of the orange paint had been beaten from it, and the single seat had been torn out, leaving four rusty nails projecting from each scar. The man searched out a squarish stone and hammered the nails down, humming more loudly. He was formulating a daring plan. He would work the boat around in front of the falls

where the big bubble bellied, and see how far he could go down the stony rapids below the pool. A man taking a risk like that couldn't have nails sticking out where they'd rake his legs if he had to move quickly.

At last he drifted on the pool, keeping the can with him. "Quite a boat," he maintained in a clear voice; and then, argumentatively but with satisfaction, "I say it's quite a boat!"

The boat, dull with the water it had soaked up, rode low and heavily. It refused to be coerced by hand paddling, and cruised, half sidewards, out into the middle of the pool, where it spun slowly three times in the circular current and then headed—or rather tailed—for the stagnant backwash between the shore boulders and the terrace of red rock. The man ceased humming and paddled frantically with his hands, first on one side and then on the other, for the boat was too wide for him to reach water on both sides at once. The boat turned around once completely, and continued to back towards the extremely green scum in the crevice. The man abandoned himself, held onto the sides, and rode in backwards, muttering. The boat bumped gently, grated along stone, stirred sinuously, and succeeded in wedging itself. The man sat and observed the pond scum with aversion.

Then he saw a long bamboo pole caught under a ledge. His spirits rose. The pole was within reach, and by bruising his knees a little, slithering in the wet mossiness of the boat, he grasped it. It was heavy and rather rotten from enduring the river and its long hiding in the pool, but having it he felt confident again. "You'll do," he told the pole. He stood erect and brandished it in both hands like a cudgel. "Swell pole." He pressed it firmly against the holding rock, and leaned on it. The boat gave way and swam sluggishly out through the scum. The man, still standing, was immensely elated. "And now, Mr. Boat!" he cried.

Maintaining his heroic erectness, he jabbed at rocks along the side and bottom, and brought the boat circuitously towards the back-rolling bubble. As he poled he hummed grandly, even venturing some open-mouthed tra-las. Approaching the bubble more closely, he became quiet and knelt down, preparatory to sitting. In this position he watched the waterfall steadily. Coming quite close, he was suddenly alarmed by the rapid streaming-away of the foam towards the rocks where the water jumped at a hundred points and turned white, like a miniature surf in a cross-rip. He made a spasmodic thrust with the pole; the boat swung sedately around, slid its stern directly under the fall, lifted its snout, and sank backwards. The man clung amazed until the water was under his chin, then with a shout let go and struck out wildly to avoid the rise of the boat.

He continued to swim, growing calmer, until he bumped on the sand-bar and could stand up in the water Thence he saw his boat ledged against a rock below the bar, the waters protesting around it. The sight enraged him. He remained angry until he had secured the boat, bailed it out, recovered his pole, and returned round the edge of the pool to the fall. Then he swore at the fall to keep his temper up, and this time managed to enter the current

just below the bubble. He sat down quickly, nervous with expected speed, believing that his pole was useless. But the boat was too water-logged. Slow and stately, it turned on the stream, let the anxious waters divide about it, coasted past the sand-bar, knocked gently from one rock to another at the head of the shallow rapids, and came to rest between two of them. The man relaxed and took his hands from the sides. "Well," he said. "Well, well."

Thereafter he became pink over his whole body with the exertion of dragging his boat back to the pool. He scraped his feet among the stones of the river bed and never noticed. He took three more rides, going a little farther each time as he became acquainted with the most prominent rocks. He was so confident on the fifth ride that during the burdensome start he sat with his pole in his hands and regarded the world before him.

In the canyon below the rapids, where the rocky shores grew into cliffs with dense cedar and spruce forests above them was a splendid curve which hid the lower river. Over the cliff and forest a great rounded thunderhead swelled voluminously out of the west and darkened the trees. It appeared to fill the sky, and its upper bosses were bright with sun. The man felt this cloud a recognition of the dimension of his undertaking, and gazed at it with stern exultation.

In the late afternoon a woman came over the hill on the road. When she first appeared, irritation was in her walk. The clouds had spread far east and were no longer gilded. The wind kept blowing her hair.

Part way down she stopped, and stood with her hands on her hips. "For goodness sake," she exclaimed. "For goodness sake, what does that man think he's doing?" She stared. "And yelling his head off like a lunatic."

The man was just launching out from the jade-colored, white-streaked, back-bellying bubble. He was standing upright in the orange boat, the bamboo pole held aloft like a spear. As he gravitated toward the rapids, his mouth could be seen to open tremendously and repeatedly. He waved his left arm in accompaniment. Faintly, even over the wind and the rush of the falls, the woman could hear the words. "Sailing, sailing," roared the man in the boat. He shook his spear. "Sailing, sailing," he roared, until the boat stumbled and knocked him to his knees. Even then his mouth opened and closed similarly. Only when the boat stalled, with a white fan of water behind it, did he close his mouth. Then he scrambled out, grabbed the chain on the prow, and dragged, tugged, and jerked the boat up the slope of rock and froth.

When the boat was in the pool again he commenced at once to climb into it and to work his mouth. "Sailing, sailing!" he bellowed.

The woman said, "Gracious heavens, he's absolutely crazy," and recovered herself. She advanced to the edge of the rock and yelled at the man. He was then half-way over the stern and kicking valiantly. The woman yelled, "John!" She leaned forward and stuck her chin out when she yelled. The man lay still for an instant; then he slid back into the water and held onto the stern with one hand. He looked at the woman. "Yes?" he asked.

The woman could see his mouth move. She looked angry but relieved, and

eased her voice a little. "D. L. called you," she cried. "He wants you back in town."

The man seemed to be saying something to himself. He said, "Bother D. L."

"What's that you said?" inquired the woman.

"I said all right," the man yelled.

The woman put her hands on her hips. "He called hours ago. He'll be wild."

The man let go of the boat reluctantly and paddled across to the terrace. The woman stood where she was, waiting. He drew himself out of the water slowly, with great care for his battered toes. Crab-wise he ascended the slimy, submerged rock and crawled up onto the red rock in the wind. Cautiously he walked along the red rock to the spot where he had left his things. His tracks grew more distinct as he went.

"For goodness sake, get a move on," the woman called up at him.

His thin, unmuscular body was turning blue in the wind. Bending stiffly, he removed his slippers from the towel, straightened up, and began to wipe himself. He sat down to wipe his feet, and was tender of his toes. He put his spectacles on, using both hands. Then he stood up and donned the red and blue dressing gown and the leather slippers. He wobbled on one leg at a time while putting on the slippers, and screwed his face as each rubbed over his toes. He searched a moment for the cake of soap. When he found it he put it in his pocket, and carrying his towel in one hand descended carefully to where the woman was waiting.

"What on earth were you doing out there?" she asked. But having seen what he was doing, she went on. "D. L. called up hours ago. How on earth did I know I'd have to come way down here after you? How would I know you'd be—"

They went up to the road.

"Well, I'm sure I don't know what you were doing," said the woman. "You're so cold your teeth are chattering." The man was avoiding sharp pebbles in the road, and said nothing. His peeled knees worked in and out of the opening of the dressing gown, which occasionally fled behind him on the wind.

"How would I know you'd take all afternoon?" asked the woman sharply "D. L. will be wild. And all because—well, what on earth *were* you doing out there?"

"Oh, I don't know," said the man. "I found an old boat."

The woman was unpleasantly silent.

"I was just fooling around with an old boat," the man explained; and again, "That's all I was doing, just fooling around with an old boat I found."

The wind on top of the hill was unexpectedly sustained. The woman, holding down her hair with both hands, made no reply. The man had to clutch at his dressing gown tightly to keep it from streaming out and leaving him uncovered.

HORACE GREGORY:

Broadway McPhail Has His Last Word to Say and Says It

Does anyone in this drunken room
know what it feels like to be pure,
to say, I will not drink the last drink on the house;
I shall tell the Greek to give it
to the poor pigs and bitches crowding at the bar.
I will not get up and say, laughing as if it were a joke,
Is that blood on my face, how did I get it,
and did I stain the floor?

This blood is not my blood
but is the rippling and beat of dancing water
over my head and feet and through my heart;
I am so beautifully pure
I could walk through mirrors
and leave no traces of this room behind.

I am not a dog on its hind legs leaping
for meat and bones; when I am pure
I can neither eat nor sleep,
so clean I have no heart for hate and love,
I see each woman as if she were
a virgin six-year-old in a white dress,
nesting in her small arms a quiet dove.

To be so pure, to say,

I do not need
money for rent or clothes to wear,
even if I made millions with a chain
of hot and cold, pearl-studded, ruby-eyed,
lunch counter, swing music machines
from here to Texas,
I would rather be
the white gaze upward of a singing blind man
swaying through traffic
that rolls beneath Times Square.

And not to be

that painted circus creature in your dreams,
half ape, half woman,
till you betray (and cannot leave this room)
the army photograph of a young, stiff-shaven
obituary face
over a new misfitting uniform
that might be your son.

I have seen it happen
in my time too many times,
when somebody has to wipe you out
to purify the air:

If a man (even if once so powerful
the papers did not dare to print his name)
sleeps in his weakness and his pride,
the looks, the silences of all his friends
are the last warnings of a last half hour
that comes too late.
Before the last shot is heard
in the back room of a Palm Beach hotel,
you can hear him crying,
Boys, I love you all,
do I have to fall in that dark stain
increasing on the floor
till earth breaks under me in my own blood
and stains each hand that touches mine?

If it were convenient to wash your hands
every half hour,
to insist that it was possible to know
it's better not to be so rich, so famous
that old friends who had escaped to Mexico
would like to see your handsome, smiling face
lifelike, more beautiful than anything you were,
framed and secure,
in a black box banked with roses,
you might prove it
to yourself that you are pure.

If, after the last drink that trembles to the floor,
you can say,

I need not sleep;
I shall sit awake each painful hour
through night and dawn,
as though an angel with plumed golden hair
stepped out of heaven,
at its east hand, the sun,
and at its west, the ice-ringed, floating moon,
you need not wait for someone to take you home
to someplace you had never seen before;
you can say quietly,
This city is not my city,
I do not recognize the faces here,
I have lived among the branches of wild trees,
among glittering rocks and diamond waterfalls,
I cannot identify
that overturned coupe on a dark road,
and if you touch me, I shall not bleed:
I am at last invisible and pure.

EVE MERRIAM:

California

This country lies. The over-lovely palms
caress and confuse the thin-lipped bitter shacks,
like Lady Bountiful bestowing dimpled alms
her velvet skirt touching on trouble's tracks
for a movie moment, then away away! The poor poor,
pearly tears in the private boudoir; the pretty basket
left at the dirty door. Now never again can woe be pure.
(Later arrives a gracious wreath for the casket.)

Flowers torch the sky. The bell-tolled sun
blazes the hills to exact and flawless glory;
the slums retreat to appropriate buff or dun,
and picturesque the ragged migratory.

Let the bough blight, the vulture fall on the kill,
and want stand bold and bright, scream black and shrill.

JOSEPHINE HERBST:

Embalmer's Holiday

It happened that the three friends met for Christmas in the home of old lady Shattuck. She had lost her husband years ago and her children were scattered to the ends of the earth. It was natural that the only people available were the three friends who during the course of the year had had their homes disrupted. The two women, Mrs. Fleet and Mrs. Greer, were separated from their husbands, and Mr. Dyer had left his wife. Mr. Dyer and Mrs. Fleet had known one another for a long time; they had in fact lived in the same Connecticut valley during their first year of married life. That is, Mr. Dyer's first year of married life with his first wife. It was not known whether his second wife had left him or he her, but the two women were given to understand that she was finding happiness elsewhere.

Mrs. Fleet and Mrs. Greer had a few good crying spells before Mr. Dyer came up the day before Christmas. Old lady Shattuck was determined to have a tree and was unearthing all the old tinsel and ornaments from the attic. She meant to hang on the tip of the tree the little angel that had hung on all the trees during her life with Mr. Shattuck. Mr. Shattuck's picture was surrounded with green wreathes two days before and a tall candle stood ready to be lighted to his memory on Christmas day. Mrs. Shattuck hoped she would get a chance to recite "The Night Before Christmas" and Mr. Dyer and the two women hoped they would have a chance to get a little tight.

It was inevitable that the three friends should remember with dramatic clearness the Christmas before. At that time they had been united with their respective husbands and wife and together with six other apparently happy pairs had a big Christmas party. Mr. Dyer said that to his knowledge all but two couples were now dissolved. For some reason the news made Mrs. Fleet and Mrs. Greer very cheerful.

"They say misery loves company," said Mrs. Greer. They sat pensively trying to decide what elements had been at work for such wholesale destruction.

"It's the times," said Mr. Dyer. "The world is going to pieces. It affects everything It's in the air."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Fleet. "Lots of people got married this year too and I don't see why it should have hit all of us so hard."

Mr. Dyer thought it was because they were peculiarly sensitive. Mrs. Greer said that she had never thought of Flossie Stone as particularly sensitive. Mr. Dyer said that Bill Stone was as sensitive a man as you'd find. Mrs. Fleet said who would have thought that last Christmas was to be the final Christmas she and Jim Fleet would ever spend together.

"Now none of that," said Mr. Dyer. "No red eyes. We're going to have a cheerful Christmas. Everybody is going to have a swell time." Mrs. Shat-

tuck pattered in and said that someone wanted to speak to Mrs. Greer on the telephone. Mrs. Greer left and Mr Dyer and Mrs. Fleet began talking of the early days when they had met. Mr. Dyer said that no one had been lovelier than his first wife. She was just stupid now and when he saw her as he often did in a friendly way, the past seemed an impossible dream. It was different with his second wife, they had never been happy. He didn't understand why they had come together or why they had stayed together. She was, of course, a beauty. He had to have glamour. But he had met a woman, an actress who was a real woman, not like Tillie, but a real honest to god woman with brains as well as beauty and moreover with heart. She wouldn't do the cruel things Tillie did. Tillie had never thought of anyone but herself. When he was making nine hundred a week at Hollywood they went one night to a delicatessen store to buy things for a supper and she bought everything she wanted. When he finally bought a few dill pickles for himself she had raised hell. She had made so much fuss about it you would have thought he had committed a crime. It was always like that. She had never sewed on a button for him or darned a sock and he had waited on her hand and foot. He had waited on Elsie, his first wife too, but she was at least amiable. She had even learned to bake.

"I remember her popovers," said Mrs Fleet. "I never tasted such fluffy popovers. And the delicious coffee you made when we were in the valley and came to see you on winter afternoons, remember?"

"Remember the day we came to the valley dead broke and said you had to find us a house," said Mr. Dyer. "We didn't have a cent and had to plow through drifts up to our waists to get to your place."

"We opened the door," recited Mrs. Fleet, "and there you stood. I never saw such a lovely girl as Elsie was with her hair splattered with snow. And she was a good sport to live in that old house without complaining."

Mrs. Greer came into the room smiling. She looked around embarrassed. "Who was it?" said Mr. Dyer.

"Why you know," said Mrs. Greer, giggling a little. "It's so funny. You see in New York when I was down there I met this man. He just telephoned. He's very nice, in a friendly way of course. He's very lonely, he was married fifteen years and his wife died six months ago. He was at the hotel where I was and we talked one night and he took me to dinner He wants to know if he can come up Christmas. Do you suppose it would be all right with Mrs. Shattuck, the poor thing is so lonely."

"Sure," said Mr. Dyer. "Has he any dough? He can buy us some scotch."

"Now don't get ideas," said Mrs. Greer. "He's just lonely, that's all. He'd like to buy something, of course. Shall I say to come?"

"Of course," said Mrs. Fleet. "Go ahead."

"That's what I thought," said Mrs. Greer. "I told him already."

"Who is he?" said Mr. Dyer.

"Well," began Mrs. Greer with some reluctance. "He's an embalmer"

"An embalmer," grinned Mr. Dyer.

"He's got a car and he's a nice person and as I say, lonely."

"Good for little Dottie Dimples," said Mr. Dyer playfully.

"Don't be silly," said Mrs. Greer. "If you do, I can't stand it."

"That's right," said Mrs. Fleet. "Don't tease her. He's just a friend."

"Only an acquaintance," said Mrs. Greer on the defensive.

Mrs. Shattuck was pleased at the new addition to their party. "The more the merrier," she said gaily. "You should have seen this house when Mr. Shattuck was alive Teeming with people. We had everyone pouring in all day long. Mr. Shattuck made the finest rum punch you ever tasted. People didn't overdo in those days. Drank like ladies and gentlemen. Of course the times were different. People knew the earth they were standing on. They could count on one year after the next."

"Just what I was saying," agreed Mr. Dyer, balancing on his toes. "Exactly what I tried to tell the girls."

"It doesn't explain everything to me," said Mrs. Fleet. She was trying to make up her mind about Mr. Fleet. She couldn't bear not to send him something for Christmas. But she had had a talk with Mrs. Greer and both had said they didn't care a hoot what happened to their husbands on Christmas day. They didn't intend to gratify them by so much as a Christmas card. But in the morning of the day before Christmas the entire Shattuck household turned inside out. The two young women went to town for Mrs Shattuck and the main street of the little suburban town with its clutter of bright Christmas trees before the hotel, its three fat Santy Clauses ringing bells before the chain stores, and its windows full of turkeys, began to have an effect upon the two women. Mrs. Fleet found it hard to keep the tears back. She remembered the first Christmas she and her husband had ever spent together in the valley. They had been broke and had promised not to give one another presents. But Mr. Fleet had produced one of her stockings Christmas morning stuffed with a five cent pencil, a little sack of raisins, and some pink and white peppermints that had been her favorite candy as a child. Every Christmas afterwards he had bought her pink and white peppermints. She told herself it was silly sentimentality to want peppermints or to care about Christmas anymore. In a world full of pressing events, one should not clutch at such tiny trifles, yet she did clutch. She mourned for the peppermints and when Mrs. Greer was busy elsewhere, she sneaked into a store and bought her husband a carton of cigarettes with a red Christmas wrapping. She even wrote a little card. "To Jim from his old friend, Santa Claus."

She felt better afterwards. But she hoped if she ever spent another year so miserably she would be in her grave. She wondered what Jim would do on Christmas and late that afternoon when she got a letter from him she went straight with it to Mrs. Greer.

"Can you imagine such a man," she said half laughing, half indignant. "He does that to me, just walks off with that hussy and now writes to say he wishes he could see me Christmas, it will seem strange without me Hopes I will have a nice time and will I write him a nice letter and not to feel bitter about

this terrible year. Imagine."

The two women just looked at one another. Then they laughed. "Are they crazy?" said Mrs. Greer. "You'd think it was nothing more than taking off a pair of gloves. Just a pair of gloves, like that." She stripped her hands one over the other with an indignant yet important gesture. "They haven't an idea what it means to us. No, they are all right. They are happy so they can't bear to have their Christmas spoiled. They must take a little notice of us to keep an appetite for dinner."

But a little later in the evening when a box was delivered from the express company for Mrs. Greer she broke down and cried in earnest. The box was from Mr. Greer. Mr. Dyer and Mrs. Shattuck and Mrs. Fleet stood looking on. "Jim never sent me anything," said Mrs. Fleet.

"I never got a single present and Tillie never even sent me a card," said Mr. Dyer. "All the rest of you got boxes from someone, but I don't get a thing. I'm just an orphan."

"It came from the Russian store," said Mrs. Greer excitedly pulling out stuffing and looking at newspapers clipped fine to make a padding for something hard.

"I bet he's sending back my lamp," said Mrs. Greer. "It's nothing new."

"Don't be cynical," said Mrs. Fleet. "Open it."

"Oh I remember when Mr. Shattuck used to come home loaded down with presents. Once he bought me a velvet dressing gown and it had lovely maribou all around it," babbled Mrs. Shattuck. "We used to stay up all night getting the tree ready for the children."

"It's something hard," said Mrs. Greer tugging. Out came a samovar. She sat back looking at it, then pushed it away. She got up and began walking up and down. She couldn't help it, angry tears came.

"Don't you like it?" said Mr. Dyer.

She nodded, crying harder. "Come, come," said Mrs. Shattuck. "You mustn't carry on. He meant well. It's a lovely samovar."

Mrs. Fleet stared at it. Mr. Fleet hadn't even sent her pink and white peppermints. When she was in college her father had never forgotten to send her peppermints. So long as he was alive, he had remembered and after his death for ten years Jim Fleet had remembered. With all the responsibilities of life, Christmas had been the one time when she was certain to feel something of the old cared for security of childhood. It had warmed her to remember she was someone's little girl, that no matter how necessary it was to earn a living, to compete in the world, to constantly juggle for place, yet she had been a child with long curls, deeply loved, who on Christmas went confidently to her stocking and found peppermints, year after year. Now for the first time in her life, Santa was dead, her father was dead. Jim Fleet, though alive in the world and at that moment probably kissing the back of his new wife's neck, putting a surprise present into her hand, was dead. She looked dully at the shiny samovar and said, "It's a nice samovar."

"A samovar," sobbed Mrs. Greer. "Now—it's too late for a samovar.

He knows I don't want things to do with a house anymore. I don't want possessions anymore. I don't want anything but a suitcase."

"Now, now," soothed Mrs. Shattuck. "Give yourself time, my dear. In time it will be all right. You've been treated badly but Time, as Mr. Shattuck used to say, is a Gentleman. You'll laugh a year or so from now, see if you don't."

Mrs. Greer sobbed and eyed the samovar, sitting crookedly on its bedding of snipped paper. "Why didn't he get me something to wear? All that money. He hasn't any." She sobbed again but she was thinking of how few presents he had ever given her. He had never had much money. It had taken too much to get his training. She had never given him presents either. They had gone to a show together if they had money. It had always seemed fun to spend it together but as a result she had nothing to show for her life with him now it was gone. Except the samovar. She said, "I'm going to send it back and get the money." At the moment she only thought that she could not bear to see it around reminding her of the presents they had never exchanged until it was over. That a solid samovar, a more or less useless piece of furniture, should appear now of all times, seemed too much.

Mr. Dyer stopped the flow of tears and lightened the general depression with a brisk, "Now take it the way he meant it. He meant well. Nobody thought of me. I'm just an orphan." He went on in that vein thinking to cheer Mrs. Greer but the two women friends took it somewhat seriously. They got together in a corner and although it was after nine at night decided to run into town and buy something for Mr. Dyer. It would be terrible if no one thought of him.

Mrs. Shattuck said she hadn't thought of presents. A nice dinner had been as far as her imagination had gone. The two women friends drove hastily to town and haggled over a pair of socks and muffler. Mrs. Greer said that Mr. Greer had worn a number ten sock and Mrs. Fleet said Mr. Fleet had taken a twelve. They compromised on eleven for Mr. Dyer. When it came to picking out a muffler Mrs. Fleet leaned toward a dark red with white bars but admitted Mr. Fleet would have preferred a lovely deep green one. Mrs. Greer said her husband loved green too. The two women fondled the green scarf and finally bought it for Mr. Dyer. They felt a little sad but pleased to be buying a present for some man, even if it were not for their own husbands. Mrs. Fleet said she was afraid that Mr. Dyer was making fresh trouble for himself again and his fatal weakness for glamour would involve him in the same old way. She suspected that he had hoped for a present from the actress.

By the time they returned a package had actually arrived for Mr. Dyer and the actress had remembered him with a dressing case full of ornamental and useless objects. He then admitted that he had spent an entire day packing up a little box for the actress's daughter full of tiny dogs, airplanes, and other nickknacks tied in tissue paper with ribbons. Mrs. Greer confessed that she had weakened and had sent Mr. Greer two handkerchiefs that had been in her handkerchief box all year and had in fact been part of her husband's present

the year before. Mrs. Fleet confessed to the cigarettes. They had a good laugh and Mr. Dyer read them the recipe for eggnog calling for twelve eggs and a quart of cream as well as rum and scotch that he intended to make the next day. He said it would be a little masterpiece.

It was a sunny Christmas day and the embalmer came around ten in the morning. Mrs. Fleet was stuffing the turkey with a dressing that had been used in her family for a hundred years and Mrs. Shattuck was hunting for little moulds for Christmas cookies. The embalmer was an ordinary blond fellow rather short and stocky. Mr. Dyer took an immediate antagonism to him. He began bragging about the way he made drinks and spaghetti.

"Not better than my wife," spoke up the embalmer, Mr. Spotwood, with unexpected belligerency.

"Not better than your wife," screamed Mr. Dyer now the better for several old-fashioneds. "With all respect to your lamented wife, I can make the best spaghetti in the country."

Mr. Spotwood shrugged. "Some people would be hard up if it weren't for their own good opinion," he said.

"My good opinion! Everybody can tell you. Mrs. Fleet can tell you. I'm one of the best cooks in America. Mrs. Fleet is a wonderful cook. You're sitting in this room with two unbeatable cooks and you talk about spaghetti."

"He can make nice things," placated Mrs. Fleet. The kitchen was somewhat crowded with everyone getting in everyone's way and the presence of the embalmer made it seem full to overflowing. Mrs. Greer tactfully suggested that perhaps the men might like to take a little run into town. Mr. Dyer spitefully said in an aside that he would shame Mr. Spotwood into buying some scotch for the day. The two men departed in Mr. Spotwood's new car and the women went ahead with the cooking somewhat sadly. The three women were deeply thoughtful and engaged each in her own way upon her own separate and lost past. At that moment Christmas seemed not only wasteful but a day of singularly cruel resurrections. Mrs. Fleet said if she ever so much as noticed the day again they could take her for an idiot. Mrs. Shattuck said that the day was for children and without children no one knew what on earth it was for. Mrs. Greer said that two years before when she and Mr. Greer had been in Chicago at her mother's home it had been a wonderful day with old friends coming in all day long. "Just open house," said Mrs. Greer, "that's what it was."

By the time the men returned, their animosity had been drowned in Christmas spirits. Mr. Spotwood had been restrained with difficulty from buying a whole case of champagne. "I didn't have the heart to let him," confided Mr. Dyer with a benevolent air. He read his recipe for eggnog several times and began an argument concerning the amount of cream and eggs required. Mr. Spotwood said that the recipe sounded more like an omelet than an eggnog.

"What!" yelled Mr. Dyer. "That's all you know. You probably never made an eggnog in your life." The women looked pained.

"Listen feller," said Mr. Spotwood with infuriating familiarity. "I'm a

lot older than you and I know eggnogs of old, before you were dry behind the ears."

"You never tasted one like this," said Mr. Dyer. But he was becoming sleepy with all the pre-dinner libations. The entire household began to nod. Mrs. Shattuck retired to her room. Mrs. Greer and Mr. Spotwood went for a little drive. Mr. Dyer fell asleep on the couch with the eggnog recipe clutched in his hand. Mrs. Fleet held out to keep guard on the turkey. It was too large for the pan and took constant basting It was not as nice as the turkeys her mother used to make. The turkey she and Jim Fleet had when they celebrated their first Christmas had been nicer. They had made cranberry ice in a milk can set in the snow and had held hands singing "O Little Town of Bethlehem." At that moment it would have seemed the most natural thing in the world for Jim Fleet to press his face at the window in the back door and stamping off the snow come in calling out, "Hello baby, here's your boy." Half expectant she turned to face the blank glass. Something more mysterious and inexplicable than death had happened. It was as final as death and harder to be reconciled with. She tried to remember an old recipe for hot slaw but the eggs curdled.

Mr. Dyer roused himself in time and made his really tremendous eggnog. It was all they could do to restrain him from insisting they drink it before dinner. "Hey feller," called the embalmer. "I want some room for turkey." Crossly Mr. Dyer conceded, carrying the turkey with reckless vigor. It was a mammoth meal and Mr. Spotwood enlivened it with well meant comments in German. It was bad German but Mrs. Fleet attempted to respond with an understanding look. Mr. Spotwood persisted under the notion that he was giving a cosmopolitan touch to the dinner to say nothing of competing with Mr. Dyer, who had begun to sprinkle his remarks with French phrases. In spite of the efforts everyone made, the dinner had a melancholy air. Mrs. Greer struggled not to be bored with the embalmer's humor. Mr. Dyer struggled to keep awake for the eggnog. Mrs. Shattuck sank into a gentle contemplation of the past.

The eggnog was finally served and Mr. Dyer pronounced it a perfect masterpiece. "Ho, ho," cackled the embalmer, trusting to make up in sarcastic expression what he lacked in wit. Mr. Dyer was too befuddled to more than glare. With dignity he managed to leave the table and stalk to his own room. He fell down heavily on his bed and promptly went to sleep. Mrs. Shattuck excused herself. Mr. Spotwood and Mrs. Greer retired a little drearily to the parlor. Mrs. Fleet looked upon the remains of the feast.

With everyone taking themselves off Mr. Spotwood felt uncomfortable. He had the uneasy feeling he had not conducted himself properly. He longed to ingratiate himself and to buy something. When he bought something, it was his experience that popularity came to him, at least for the moment. Only his wife had been able to make him feel that it was possible for anyone to have a sustained interest in him. Now he hoped there was something he might buy. "Isn't there something you need in town?" he asked hopefully. Mrs. Greer

shook her head. She was angry at Mr. Dyer for deserting the party and she wished Mr. Spotwood would let her alone. She suggested that Mrs. Fleet might like a little drive.

Mrs. Fleet did not want a little drive but she did not know how to get rid of the insistent Mr. Spotwood. His need to rehabilitate himself in someone's esteem and to divert to himself some tiny ray of interest succeeded in getting her into the car. They drove around the snowcovered streets of the little town. Everyone was indoors but the many Christmas trees made the houses unnaturally gay. Mr. Spotwood said he couldn't bear to look at them. By this time his own past Christmasses with his dead wife began to be reconstructed with a peculiar halo.

"You take this country," said Mr. Spotwood impressively. "It's a country of little homes. Everyone is in his little home, like in a shell. If you have a home, it's swell, if you lose it, it's hell. There's no place to go. I often think it's very limiting, especially now I'm all alone. After fifteen years you feel pretty alone."

Mrs. Fleet had listened attentively. She tried to begin a sympathetic reply and Mr. Spotwood volunteered that he was an old man.

"Why Mr. Spotwood," said Mrs. Fleet. "That's silly. You're in your prime."

"Relatively speaking," said Mr. Spotwood, "I'm an old man. But so long as I can do anything for anyone, I'll stick around. The minute I'm useless, *schluss*. I'm never going to be a burden on anybody."

Mrs. Fleet resigned herself to cheering up Mr. Spotwood. She began to feel a little sore at Mrs. Greer for having invited the embalmer, who was not lightening the burden of the day. Mr. Spotwood began telling how a year ago he and his wife were driving to Florida and he had a little attack of appendicitis. He had instructed his wife what to do if he got worse and had taken pleasure in knowing that all his affairs were in shape. In the end, he got over it and months later it was his wife who had checked out.

Mrs. Fleet politely asked if she had been sick long. "Six weeks," said Mr. Spotwood, now speaking with a new grave voice. "I didn't know she was going to check out. She didn't know either, that's one thing I'm thankful for. Day before she checked out she cried a little. Perhaps she suspected. I said, 'Now mamma, come now, we can't have that. No tears, cheer up, we'll have you on your feet in no time.' She was game, she smiled right back at me. But that night she began to slip. My brother's a doctor but he wouldn't touch her. 'I can't do it, Ed,' he said. 'I haven't got the nerve.' I phoned another feller, doctor on Long Island, friend of mine. 'You got to come,' I said, 'you got to get right over here.' He came and they got her on the table but it was too late. She never came out of it and I never saw her again. Believe me, I wouldn't look at her after they got her fixed up. She was gone and what was left wasn't her is the way I look at it. They can talk about heaven but I can't take stock in it. It's here and now, if you ask me, and very little of that."

He had succeeded so fully in lowering his spirits and the spirits of Mrs.

Fleet that he became cheerful. Mrs. Fleet's sympathetic silence soothed him for the cuts that the snobbish Mr. Dyer had handed him during the day. When he and Mrs. Fleet reentered the house, he was almost genial. Inside the party was beginning to revive. Mr. Dyer was pouring a little drink and cast a baleful glare at Mr. Spotwood, who did not flinch. We can't all write for Hollywood but he could probably buy and sell Dyer at this minute. And he had been loved devotedly for fifteen years.

Mrs. Shattuck had waked up and was ready to recite "The Night Before Christmas." Mrs. Greer was looking pensively into the fire. Mrs. Fleet and Mr. Spotwood sat down with the other orphans and a toast was proposed to "Ye old time Christmas." Mrs. Shattuck got up and lighted the candle under the portrait of her deceased husband.

RUTH LECHLITNER:

Season of Light

(*Spring,* 1940)

Snow on the late crocus after
Hard winter. . . O season of light!
Metal-grey rain with the wind change,
Doves bearing the leafless bough.
Miraculous season: time
For the sign, the stigmata:
Blood from cold stone,
Tears from the Munich conscience.

Remember again the crisis seismographs:
Instruments set to the bowel rumblings,
The crust shift baring the valued ore,
The pull toward the molten center,
The entombed channels breaking:

Light over running water: the bloodroot
Stemmed in granite
—This is not our peace

No wind in no tree. . . and the fixed stars:
Frost on the vague heaped earth
And the shape under the wire.
The sentry heard a bird sing at daybreak:
No tree and no bird, only again
The far whistle. But his eyes cried sleep,
His eyes closed under walled earth dreaming.
The stars fell and the shape under the wire
Moved in the shadow, closer. . .

O season of stale light underground
Burning on subway headlines:
Follow the winged feet of Mr. Welles,
Burst from mines nesting in sea lanes,
Fall from the blazing Heinkels,
Weep for all refugees
While Franco lovely in a red beret
Hears the wind's song over the olive trees:

By the waters of Babylon there lay we down.
Rain tomorrow. . . The speaker believes
All progress blocked by a generation dead
In Flanders Field
(And at Times Square spring walks
In toeless shoes, her blood-enameled nails
Under the thin hose shining).
Snow on the late crocus, and after
Hard winter, the census taker:
What is your name your income
Have you a radio a washing machine
What do you think of in the hour before daylight
What are you breathing for loving for living for
What do you dream?

We sleep, we dream
Of earth channels breaking
Under fixed stars, of a moving shape in the shadow

We remember white walls
Shutting out past and future:
The now, the real,
Pain under opiates along raw nerves,
Knives steaming in surgery, the red gloves,
The coarse bed sheets, the antiseptic halls,
Sick scent of hyacinth,
Nurse with the cold starched palms,
Oranges and ether, the long
Table on rubber wheels
And the long shape motionless. . .

Metal-grey rain with the wind change,
Miraculous seasons: time
For the sign, the stigmata

There was the song of a bird at daybreak:
The people crept out again to the market place,
Out to the unreal pyramided fruit:
Bloom on imagined grapes,
On broccoli's pebbled green,
Heeled to the budded thick
White flesh of cauliflower. . .
There in the dreamed markets
They heard the fierce song overhead,
They saw the wings, they fell on their faces,

They lay there quietly afterward,
Dark on the cobblestones,
Mouths to the rounded fruit, tasting
Death's excellent vitamins.

The shape under the wire, the shadow
Moves closer:
This is not our peace

Let us shut the new season from our eyes,
Pull broken chairs close to the fire,
Dream of old legends, tell the ancestral tales:
The Black One walks abroad, sparks at his heels
On the hard earth: one saw him
Shaped like a white wolf, another
Heard him knock thrice on the door before death struck.
A young girl went to the forest alone
To meet her lover: later they found her
Lost, eyes staring
With terrible joy, and they saw
The Mark on her breast. . .
Let us mould us a silver bullet,
Let the strong seek him out by the full of the moon.
There are tales to tell: our past
Walks in the still night. . .
Let the blood remember.

But the rains come with the wind change,
The dreams fade: we turn in our sleep,
The sign and the symbol lost: the mind stands
Naked to face its morning,
Waiting the day (our spring, our peace), the flower
Risen again, its petals shining white,
Its red root set in granite.

JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN:

A Visiting Card for Emily

No chronicle, melody, alarm of strings
Informed our accident of meeting here,
Nor ploughed the atmosphere
As if an almanac had so defined
This day, this town, this wind;

Up from the Cape, a lemon morning swings
With acid light for things
Fir-pointed and oblique,
Stains the Berkshires, spreads on woods to seek
Some quiet entrance to the western state
And leave us Emily for intimate.

Hail this acre for a new world's myth,
A gayer dust than all New England's quarry;
Hail this sanctuary:
Our interstellar hostess here resigned
Her transience with the blind
To lift upon materials of death
Imperial monolith,
In echoing chambers made
Of gems and bones her private balustrade,
Or carved on quietude a spear, a wing;
This acre's measure is a learned thing.

Among the candelabra, high-branched, cold,
This baroque jail of her fine agony,
Silver, mahogany,
Old silence, evident of her, presides;
Its armored air recedes
To such mementoes as the mind recalled
Nor hands may ever hold;
To such remembrance as
That of Donne, of Blake, and Shelley is.
To this degree is her distinction weighed
Who took the whitest elements to wed.

This hour was life for us, who must retreat
And force our visions on the flashing east
Where now no sign is passed
That does not speak memorials to her,
Nor arrowing vistas where
She is not ultimate; quick daisies fret
No casual field, nor shut
Their buttons on a hill
But she is imminent and super-real.
How coolly now the failing sun awards
Sweet praise for Emily, her book of words.

(Amherst, 1938)

A Letter

A day was nothing until this: words went
Like horns through traffic, like the instant birds;
A day was dormant, yet-to-be-danced among
The neon sudden furniture and books.

It was that intricate familiar thing,
When, coughing like the French ambassador,
The postman said his phrase about the rain
And went undeviating through the door.

O, if I wanted legacies, a poem,
An invitation to the dance, or hoped
For declarations of a stranger's love,
My fingers burst like matches on your name.

If it is later now, if the rain has stopped,
If no one dressed in seaweed lurches in
Like some surprised Ophelia with green hands,
I covet reason but for truth like this:

There is communication on the earth
As quiet as the opening of a wing;
There is a wine of choice, and we who drink
Touch all our future to that emphasis.

JOHN BERRYMAN:

The Spinning Heart

The fireflies and the stars our only light,
We rock, watching between the roses night
If we could see the roses. We cannot.
Where do the fireflies go by day, what eat?
What categories shall we use tonight?
The day was an exasperating day,
The day in history must hang its head
For the foul letters many women got,
Appointments missed, men dishevelled and sad
Before their mirrors trying to be proud.
But now, we say, the sweetness of the night

Will hide our imperfections from our sight,
For nothing can be angry or astray,
No man unpopular, lonely, or beset,
Where half a yellow moon hangs from a cloud.

Spinning however and balled up in space
All hearts, desires, pewter, and honeysuckle,
What can be known of the individual face?
To the continual drum-beat of the blood
Mesh sea and mountain recollection, flame,
Motives in the corridor, touch by night,
Violent touch and violence in rooms;
How shall we reconcile in any light
This blow and the relations that it wrecked?
The nineteen pressures on the single act
Freeze it at last into its season, place,
Until the flood and disorder of Spring.
To Easterfield that famous bore, defining
Space tied into a sailor's reef, our praise:
He too is useful, he is part of this,
Inimitable, tangible and human,
And Theo's disappointment has a place,
An item in that metamorphosis
The horrible coquetry of aging women.
Our superstitions barnacle our eyes
To the tide, the coming good; or has it come?—
Insufficient upon the beaches of the world
To drown that complex and that bestial drum.
Triumphant animal, upon the rest
Bearing down hard, brooding, come to announce
The causes and directions of all this
Biting and breeding: how will all your sons
Discover what you, assisted or alone,
Staring and sweating for seventy years,
Could never discover, the thing itself?
Your fears,
Fidelity, and dandelions grown
As big as elephants, your morning lust
Can neither name nor control. No time for shame,
Whippoorwill calling, excrement falling, time
Rushes like a madman forward. Nothing can be known.

JAMES T. FARRELL:

A Short Story

He read the newspapers in the reading room of the public library. He took a keen interest in the columns and columns of print, telling him of faro games, broads, millionaires, mergers, conferences, fires, dead generals, live generals photographed with a chest full of medals, accidents, deaths, and broads. There were many others in the crowded room reading newspapers for the same reason that he did. Outside it was beginning to get dark, and the room was warm and friendly with its humanity, its electric lights, and the forgetfulness in the dead columns of yesterday's and yesteryear's newsprint. He read on. An international conference, farmers going berserk and raiding stores for food, strikes, appeals for charity that made him laugh, mergers, broads getting married while other broads were getting divorced, broads in bathing suits snapped on the sands of California, murders, ministers, accidents, steamships, prize fighters, and broads, broads, broads.

Reading on, seeing the pictures of women in the paper, and scratching himself, feeling the dirt ingrained into his own body, he could not make himself believe that he actually belonged to the same species as these women whose pictures were in the papers. He had to force conviction on himself to believe that yes, after all, these dames whose mugs and chassis were in the paper, they were only human too. He went on reading until he began imagining that he, himself, was a big shot, and able to associate with broads just like these dames in the newspapers. He read on. Columns of print, columns that he read trance-like until he couldn't read any more because of his hunger. Then, he concentrated on the food advertisements, trying to make himself believe that he had been fed. Then, back again to the society news to see what was going on in that realm. More columns of print . . .

It was going to be pretty chilly walking all the way over to the Munie for a free flop. Right now if he had sixty cents in his jeans to spare, he could live like an aristocrat and take a room for the night at the Mills Hotel at Thirty-sixth Street and Seventh Avenue. But that was paradise. That was the flop house where there was no delousing. And to think of the life of some of these big shots whose names were in the papers. Press one button for a meal. Two buttons for a drink. Three buttons for a dame. The bastards, their life was almost that simple. Six months ago, he'd got himself fixed up to look almost human, and he'd gone to the Lonely Hearts Club, and danced with a dame. Jesus, what hadn't that done to him! And Jesus, to be with one when she was naked. Right now he'd rather think of having a dame naked and willing in a room with him than of anything else, even food. No, it was a toss-up between the two pleasures. And since he could think of both of them, why be stingy with his thoughts?

He was damned hungry. You'd think there was an ocean storm in his guts. And if he only had a cigarette. Now there was kingdom come.

He got up and left the reading room, leaving the newspaper file on the table. He went outside and walked around to the Fifth Avenue steps. He stood there shivering, watching the passing panorama. It was getting late in the afternoon of a gray January day. There were noises, busses and automobiles, people, people who belonged to the human race. And there must be a lot of rich dames in the crowd walking by on the sidewalk. He was seeing all kinds of fur coats. He tried to visualize how some of these dames in the fur coats would look naked. But he had business to attend to, some little conferences here and there. He gazed about him with the shifty, beggary-eyed expression of the stiff. He was looking for someone to hustle. He turned his coat collar up, stuck his hands in his trouser pockets, and stood there, still shivering. He tried to hustle a well-dressed, sappy-looking young fellow who had an armful of books, but it was no soap. He descended the steps and picked out a clean-shaven bird with a pearl gray hat. He started giving the fellow a long hard-luck story about how he had just come in from Chicago where things were right fierce, and he was busted and wanted a flop, a chance to get a clean shirt out of the laundry, a good meal, a chance to spruce up and see if he couldn't rustle himself a job because he'd come all the way from the west coast since last fall and things were bad all over the country and he guessed it was best to try his luck in New York. He got a quarter and a half pack of Camels and, in giving obsequious thanks, he asked God to bless his benefactor. He hustled another dime, and then he walked around to Forty-second Street, and over toward Broadway.

At Broadway he had more luck, unusual luck, and he stopped hustling for the day with the sum of one dollar in his pocket. Tonight he could sleep at the Mills Hotel in paradise. But first of all, he was going to stow away some grub. He ate in a Coffee Pot over on Ninth Avenue, and while he was putting away some hamburgers he thought back to his flight from home at seventeen, his wanderings back and forth across the face of America, warm nights in the jungles, cold nights in cities, the time that he'd got a dose from a two-bit whore that he'd picked up on West Madison Street in Chicago, an idyllic summer that he'd spent on a farm. But he guessed that he was just one of those guys who was born to have it jammed up his can, and that was all. He kept remembering and remembering.

After eating, he went out and bought some moonshine. The first drink warmed him, and he didn't mind its bitter taste. He'd drunk much worse. The second swig was even more warming. The third made his head a trifle light. He walked along the crowded streets of New York with a new-born confidence. He thought of movie actresses, society dames, chorus girls, rich broads, all of them parading before him. He held dialogues with himself, addressing obscene words to the images of motion picture actresses that he held in his mind.

Baby, there's many the broads better than you that I tossed out of bed.

See! But just for the sake of sweet, sweet, sweet charity, and because I feel pretty good and at the top of my form tonight after cleanin' up on the street, and because I'm warm-hearted and soft and don't like to disappoint the gals, well come on kid! You can sleep with me this time.

He smiled. He disappeared in a dark entrance way for another drink. He reappeared on the sidewalk, smiling again with all his new-born drunken assurance.

He held more dialogues with the visions of naked women.

You, you're a bitch! I say you're a bitch! See! And there's only one way for a bitch like you to get tamed!

He saw himself with a naked movie star cowering before him while he advanced on her with a horsewhip. She shivered, drew back, screamed, crouched in a corner. He drove her from corner to corner, lashing her bare back and buttocks, horsewhipping her until her lovely back was welted and oozing blood.

He laughed raucously, and strangers stopped to look at him, all of them perplexed, some of them frightened.

He staggered on. The world became soft, friendly, and it made him so happy that he sang. He sang a song about a bo who'd been in all parts of the world. Each stanza ended with a request for a drink from the listener before the next stanza could be sung. He took a drink at the end of each stanza, no longer bothering to go into corners or dark entrance ways, but stopping in the center of the sidewalk, pulling out his bottle, and swigging. He walked on, singing drunkenly, happier than he had been since Christ knows when. The world became happier and happier, less and less hostile. He became one real guy all right. His belly was warm. He didn't feel any chill. He didn't need an overcoat now.

He zigzagged up and down streets, and reaching Third Avenue, he told the elevator girders that his name was Mr. Christ. In Tompkins Square, he kissed the bare trees and told them that they were lovely girls. He flopped down on a bench in the deserted square, pulled out his bottle, and had another drink. He felt the quarter in his pocket.

He got up and staggered on. A couple of trees seemed to punch him in the mouth. He called them dirty sons of bachelors and laughed. The world became full of blackness. It rocked, twirled, wheeled, spun, jigged under his feet. He swayed and another tree seemed to punch him in the face, and then a white streak seemed to jab through a cosmic darkness. He fell down and whirled on the earth like one spun on a rapidly moving wheel. He labored to his feet and staggered along until he fell in a doorway on Third Avenue and lay there, as if dead. The wind whistled and snow started falling.

PAUL ROSENFELD:

The Grandeur of Daumier

When if ever has it fully been perceived, sufficiently remarked on, Daumier's kinship both to the heroes of the brush and needle and to the supreme comedians? It was but dimly noticed in his lifetime: "He died very poor, very famous, and almost entirely unknown." Balzac indeed had told him, "There's something of Michelangelo in your skin!" Delacroix had copied certain of his interpretations of the nude. Baudelaire had compared him glowingly with Molière; recognized evocations of color in his black-and-white. When blindness overtook him, Corot had hastened to save him from dying in the gutter. The mass of artists, critics, collectors, museum-directors nonetheless saw in his work, with approbation or disapprobation, only pictorial exaggerations, to the point of the ludicrous or the detestable, of the peculiarities and defects of specific statesmen, barristers, and members of the bourgeoisie. What they perceived they took for bitter personal and party satire: in their eyes Daumier figured almost exclusively as the embattled republican and proletarian. Republican and proletarian his political sympathies indubitably were: of the people, he was with the people. Yet exclusively a caricaturist, particularly an interested and fanatical one, he never had been; and fame in his case as in that of many others was merely the sum of misconceptions.

The sixty-odd years since his burial at public expense have, it is true, given him a measure of the love he actually and richly deserved. The magnificences of tone in his lithographs, the majesties of somber coloration in his paintings, have not escaped the living. Fifty cities are striving for Homer dead. Critical appreciations have multiplied; collectors and museums pursue his work, and the trade circulates innumerable counterfeits of it. Probably the correspondences between Daumier's art and that of the post-impressionists (flowing from his anticipation of their decorative effects with exploitations of flat color and strong outline) have assisted the triumph—these, and the fact that the enormous editions of his journalistic prints permitted a widespread perception of his giant-like, warm, good spirit. We would, however, be committing a common error if we ascribed this act of justice exclusively to the passage of time. "Beneath all, individuals!": an elite composed of the disinterested and of the interested, in this case connoisseurs like Claude Roger-Marx and speculators like the run of picture-dealers—these too have helped. Whatever the cause, the mistakenness of the idea that Daumier was primarily the interested caricaturist, the prince of party satirists, has not escaped recent generations. They are aware of the degree to which Daumier's contemporaries projected their own bitterness into his work. Much of his performance they recognize as not in any sense caricatural; and from the portion of it expressing social criticism, they see that the accent of personal, class, and factional poison

is as absent as is the hard or jagged line.

Unquestionably the artist perceived the moral deformities of the powerful; unquestionably his social satire in instances excites feeling of indignation, scorn of chicanery and misrule. Never on the other hand does it, like so much recent caricature, breed in the beholder the ugliness and hatefulness it castigates, and diminish his fund of humanity by filling him with rancour and bitterness. A joy flows from it all. The perfection of mimicry, the beauty of design like that of Greek friezes, divert the mind, prevent its fixation on the picture's grotesque or horrible ingredients. Almost invariably the satire rouses laughter; the refinement and abstractions introduce the observer to a universal moral deformity merely comically apparent in King Louis Philippe, M. Guizot, or a butcher of the faubourgs. At last there has dawned on the world the truth that this lithographer who got his poor living by contributing to radical and popular journals and made his holidays of painting was a visionary for whom the earth was a symbol; a man addressed not to momentary facts but to the essential, grasping the inner truth of things and their forces, seeing what he felt in the active, dramatic figures of human creatures, most often drawing his subject-matter from his imagination. In the face of this recognition, he still is "very famous" and not quite known. Infrequently if at all has it been clearly seen and said that Daumier is not far from equality at once with Rembrandt and Michelangelo, Cervantes and Molière. The failure to remark this proximity both to the great baroque draftsmen and to the great comic poets is tantamount to blindness to his art's rare friendliness to human strength, its corroboration of all that makes us human.

Turn if you will to some volume of reproductions of it. See if the names of these mighty draftsmen and comedians do not rise to your lips and return again and again, called as often by the humble journalistic prints as by the celebrated paintings! In part the association will no doubt spring from scattered evidences of Daumier's early familiarity with the baroque masters' designs and from his numerous depictions of situations in *Don Quixote* and Molière's comedies. But only in part: what will evoke them mainly is the circumstance that before you the baroque form profoundly is expressing an arch feeling and vision blood-broother to that of the great comic authors. That form is the broad, convex, dynamically mobile one, built of curving, sinuous, soft yet immensely vigorous lines and flowing areas of tone which in the lithographs and wash-drawings range in subtle gradations and precious greys through the whole gamut of black and white. Together these lines and areas describe or constitute swelling sculptural shapes, in instances light and graceful, but frequently heroic despite their physical minuteness—Michelangelesque masses round of contour and broad of surface. Causing the eye to follow their inclinations, they lend the shapes the appearances of bulks prolonging and displacing their weights. Gentle on occasions as gliding rivers, on others swift as express trains or falling stones or erupting volcanoes, the mobile masses swell outward and hollow space in various directions.

This chiaroscuro meanwhile differs from Rembrandt's, not only for the

reason that not the light but the shadow prevails in it, or that it gives the effect not of illuminated gloom but of begloomed luminosity, mirroring the somber, gas-lit luster of the nineteenth century. It differs mostly because the mass of it has absolute comicality—by reason of the abundant admixture of grotesque ingredients. There are lines in Daumier intrinsically comic, tragi-comic, in their fatness and heavy droop; others delicately ludicrous in their toplofty verticality, doubly so by virtue of their contrast with the former. There are areas drolly overblown, doubly so by virtue of their subtle opposition to wry and meager ones. There are charming shapes inherently clownish, quixotic, or inert, ridiculously lanky or ridiculously dumpy; and shapes laughably anticlimactic, commencing mountainously, concluding mousily, or slyly deviating from their original uprightness and relating themselves to scrubby or tortuous shapes. Certain of the movements are abrupt, bizarre, vertiginous. Others are indeterminate, starting in thunder and defalcating in smoke: combining themselves in comic rhythms with others equally grotesque, they compose essential comediettas or whole classic comedies. Immediately this humorous disposition of light and shade represents the mixed feeling which simultaneously and excruciatingly comprehends antitheses: perfection and imperfection, kindness and cruelty, harmony and dissonance.

It is the feeling of the grotesque shortcoming of the essential human fact in reference to human convention, whether that convention be government, wedlock, the law, or the stage. It is the feeling of the moral deformities close to the heart of things; malformations that contrast as ludicrously with the dignity and beauty the human creature believed inherent in himself and his institutions, as the impudent leers of lawyers off their guard contrast with the grave black of their legal vesture. Above all, this intuition embraces the absurdity of most of the forces vehemently operative under the surface of existence: the preposterousness of many of the forces which motivated the people of the industrial, bourgeois century, shaped their destinies, filled the earth with tragi-comic events, and nevertheless remain timeless. The array of them grows clear in countless variations: they range from the lightly comic motives of sentimentality and lubricity, self-complacence and supererogation, through the more macabre ambition, vainglory, and duplicity, to the fanaticism, rapacity, and delusionary afflatus dangerously verging on the horrible.

The designs' amazing similitude to persons in the dramatic moments when a glance, a gesture, or an attitude reveals the truth, of course has helped link the spectators' and the artist's minds. Daumier was an arch-illusionist: corporeally firm, his masses have the semblance of objects solid in their spatial ramifications. Fundamentally in his as in all great art, the form itself is the chief vehicle of the vision. In causing the eye to trace and comprehend them, the plastic movements impel us to reproduce them inwardly: thus they produce within us a condition like Daumier's in his hour of feeling—a condition which makes for perceptions of the idea correlative with it. The form again communicates the artist's content through the circumstance that, as in all great art, its components and their sums really possess the qualities

and characters of the forces he felt intensely in their swell, momentum, vital directions. Through the sag of the comically heavy lines we grasp semi-consciously the spirit of philistinism: psychophysical inertia; through the ludicrously thin, toplofty, sticking ones, the spirit of phantastic idealism. The dislocated wandering ones convey disintegration and drunkenness; the blanching tones, the breath of the equivocal. Those madly fluttering shapes, those aimlessly clouding ones, and those that deviously squirm; they flutter and cloud and squirm in the modes of fustian, vapidity, and chicanery. This overblown bulk spreads in boorishness. That prim one erects itself in self-satisfaction. Those diminishing, sidewise-lurching ones are in the state of energies dizzied by the mad tenor of events. Other lines, tones, shapes, movements well-nigh exhaust the category of the comic or tragi-comic motive.

But as in the art of Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Tintoretto, and the remainder of the baroque pretorian guard, the components are filled with vitality and related to one another. For all their grotesquerie, lines and areas, shapes and movements complete each other, produce a visual equilibrium. The eye comes to rest within the limits of the rich and glowing picture. As in the great comedians, in Daumier the feeling of the mixed was serene: equilibrium is serenity's plastic symbol There was much of sweetness in his ironic intuition: a sense of a universe coherent in spite of its discord and dizziness, infinitely vital, fascinatingly complex, falling into dramatic patterns wonderful beyond the dreams of poets, cruel but in the last analysis on the side of society and health. He saw each distortion of the will involving a punishment more or less comically "fitting the crime." That of the milder was grotesqueness, gracelessness. That of the graver was isolation from the race and self-destruction: he saw rapacity leading to the corner of the unreal; fanaticism to the inhuman desert and the carcasses of mules; hypochondria to the merry hands of death in the guise of quackery. Though the gods would not or could not prevent human folly, the wags at least did not reward it—and they had given man his critical faculty.

Not all Daumier's work, to be sure, is the comic vision fixed in the momentum of dynamic form! Periodically his feeling seems to have unified and brought the forces of other categories within his scope. There are paintings by Daumier black with a knowledge of death—the brutality behind the scene of things—joyfulness and spontaneity beaten down by starvation and the battle against overwhelming odds—bondage of life to earth; a knowledge even more morbid than tragic, that of an individual who for the moment could not, as Rembrandt invariably did, conquer his despair, but hugged his darkness. There are others lyrical of quickening forces: compassion, reasonableness, maternalism, the conciliatory warmth of fire and friendship, the vital aplomb of sturdy persons, compassion, humanitarianism, and the recurrent impulse toward freedom and toward light. In the swelling bosomy forms, we posit maternity and the relation of woman and child. In the hand-like shapes, the joy with which man grasps the glass of wine. In the whirling capital masses, the fullness which ejects song from the singer's throat. The expressions of unified feeling

nonetheless do not preponderate. The sinister and the sheerly lovely remain the external panels of the triptych which was Daumier's truth. The central panel is the realm of all that causes the grimace of existence. Certainly most of his lithography belongs in the category of great comic art, and the lithographs are superior to the rest of his work both in bulk and in virtuosity and versatility. For all his final well-nigh triumphant adjustment to the medium of painting, Daumier never became a colorist in more than a restricted sense, or fully mastered the technique of pigmentation. Almost from the beginning, on the other hand—from his twenty-third year when the little Parisian suddenly and completely became "Daumier"—he was a giant in lithography. In this medium and in other black-and-whites he attained his wonderful atmospheric looseness and freedom of drawing, and his accurate science in the disposition of tones and masses.

And the root of this plastic expression of the comic vision that sets him on the eminence from which he ultimately looks at us? For one thing, it seems to have been the absence of the erotic in his inordinately sensitive spirit. His subject-matter, to be sure, assigns the erotic its place in human life, even though preponderantly in the form of its grotesquer manifestations. But the spirit of his expression reveals it, if at all, mainly in the shape of a responsiveness to the comfortableness and capacity of woman. That the erotic existed in Daumier's personality may not be doubted. Probably, however, it existed behind partition walls, segregated from the remainder of his life. Now, persons suffused with erotic sentiment rarely show a prevailing sense of the comicality of things. The motive in its important manifestations is not, cannot be, humoristic. Where on the contrary it is absent, the comic sense is left free. Certainly this motive does not really speak in the expressions of Cervantes and Molière. Aristophanes and Shakespeare, Mozart and in our own day E. E. Cummings have, it is true, combined comic and erotic feeling. Still, these men are the romantic exceptions to the rule: the comedian rarely is the knight of Venus. The absence of the motive from Daumier's spirit may even, for all we know, have predetermined his relatively greater success with black-and-white than with painting. Margaret Fuller probably was not far from right when in her naive way she declared, "Color is consecrated to passion!"

Combined with this free sense of humor there existed a positive impersonality. It was a feeling that could not remain personal. Whatever the injustices the being in whom it was housed might suffer, it could not concentrate on them, could not love self nor cherish personal or class or factional hates and grudges. Personal sufferings became its keys to the inner daily life of humankind. The inordinate sensibility became a love of truth. Certainly that is what Forain charmingly signified in his response to the question of what he thought of Daumier. "Ah, Daumier," the implacable satirist replied. "He was different from the rest of us! *Il était généreux!*" But what was that other than a way of saying that Daumier was of the company of the greatest artists? Magnanimity: what is it but the word for all of them?

ELI CANTOR:

Take Me, Missus, Take Me

Against the yellow brick wall of the apartment house their dark faces and bright dresses made a tattered line of color. They sat on old boxes and splintering crates, some lounging, some dozing, some talking at each other with bold gestures and sharp laughter. The warm morning sun lighted the shabbiness of their dresses, etched the frayed hems and the worn heels, traced the brown skin of their legs where it shone dark through the runs in their stockings.

Every now and then the 170th Street bus growled by, thickening the air with its bluish exhaust. Small children darted about in shrilling groups, making up games, sure and easy in the bright spring morning. Their mothers went to their shopping, jostling along the sidewalks, into the grocery stores, the dairies, the vegetable markets, the butcher shops, the five-and-tens.

Elvira's eyes were closed. Her thin, brown neck curved back to rest her head against the wall. Her painted mouth was open, breath stirring through it slowly. Her body was relaxed, the spindly legs stuck out stiffly in a tart V.

Inez, fat and sullen beside her, shifted her weight uncomfortably and grumbled. "Ten o'clock awready, and nothin' but a splinter in my behin' . . ."

She twisted her lips and spat on the dry gray sidewalk. "Effn we sittin' here at ten o'clock at night, wouldn' have no splinters f'm waitin'. I betchyou the Gawge Wash'nton Bridge on that!"

" 'Druther have the splinters!" Sister Susy said sharply. She jerked her faded blue skirt over her bony knees, and turned angry eyes on Inez. "Ef you got to tawk like that, tawk soft." She scowled. "It ain' no joke!" She glanced meaningfully at Elvira.

"Ain' jokin'," said Inez. "Ain' jokin' by one big hell of a long shot! Whut'd you have for supper last night?" She licked her teeth and spat again.

"Awright," said Sister Susy, quietly. "Ain' nobody sayin' this sittin' here bring us cash-money for pohk chops, but it still ain' you place puttin' sinful notions in the ears of a young gal. She got big 'nouf notions awready, thout'n you stretchin' 'em right up to de Devil's front door!"

"G'wan," muttered Inez. "You been listenin' at Father Divine again. What you ask, is ask any preacher-man what *he* et for supper last night, an' don't waste you time a-beatin' you gums at me for makin' a sensible remark. The most damn sensible remark sence one day I ast myself jes' why I was bawn."

Elvira opened her eyes slowly, a drowsy cat smile on her lips. "Bawn to have fun," she whispered. "Settin' in the sun in the mawnin' and dancin' with m' honeyman in the night-time."

"Eatin's fun, too," snapped Inez. "An' a place to sleep 'thout havin' to tap a bedbug on the shoulder an' ask for permission to get in baid!"

Elvira stretched, sat up straight, blinked her eyes, looked slowly down the

line of women from one patient face to the next. "Lawd," she complained, "Ain't *no*body got nothin' yet?"

"Splinters," moaned Inez. "Got a forest planted in my bottom."

Elvira's eyes grew warm with trouble. "Say," she whimpered, "I just got to make at least one dollar today. I just *got* to!"

"You an' all the rest of us," Inez snorted.

Sister Susy reached for Elvira's hand sympathetically. "Don' fret, gal. Ain' nothin' to do but wait for the queens and the duchesses to make up they minds."

"Since eight-thirty!" protested Elvira, angrily, "An' not one single one . . . !"

Inez gestured with a fat hand. "They'll be comin' soon. Thursday's always a late day up here. You'll come to find out."

Elvira turned on her accusingly. "Don' know why I let you talk me into comin'! I tol' you I . . ."

"Don' you sass me, gal," Inez shot at her. "I didn' read in no paper where somebody left you a million dollars cash-money. You old enough to assume the responsibility effn you ma is sick. Dancin' all night ain' all they is to livin' in this mournful world, an' it's time you spill that into you haid!"

Elvira looked at her spitefully. "I does my own thinkin', thank you jes' the same! Save you moralizin' for you own fat sins!" She raised her voice as Inez lifted her hand threateningly. "An' don' lift you paw at me, 'cause I scratches you eyes out with pleasure!" She bared her teeth at the older woman.

"Don' know how you maw ever whelped a bitch like you," Inez muttered. "You maw's a good woman."

Elvira laughed, high and shrill. "Why, ain' you heard 'bout the flowers an' the bees? That's how I was whelped. A little black bee brought me!"

Inez snorted and turned from the girl, smoothing the worn black dress over her thighs with a careful, distant gesture.

"Shush," urged Sister Susy, clamping her hand on Elvira's shoulder. "Here comes a duchess now."

They whispered to each other down the line. They leaned forward, tense, alert.

—Take me, missus! Take me! Take me!

The words staccatoed in the air, loud and electric over their heads, though no one spoke.

—Take me! Take me! missus! Me! Me!

A dozen pair of anxious eyes turned to the white woman's placid face.

She came slowly toward them, her eyes moving from one to another, as if appraising their strength, their honesty, their use to her. A simple, hard-working woman herself, she had no conscious thought except to pick a girl to clean her house that day. But underneath she felt a flush of delight in having them crouch before her, a sense of power, of contempt.

She was blind to the hate that brooded behind the eyes turned toward her.

She had no way of knowing the cat-like arrogance of even the most abject of them, an arrogance muted by the desperate need for her money, but singing within them loud and clear. They hated her. They hated the fist of which she was a finger. But she was blind to that.

It gave her a moist, delicious feeling to see the bodies shift and twist toward her, to be the focus of their pleading. She the giver, they the poor. Nowhere else in her life did she enjoy such status.

She was still some distance from them when Elvira bounded up and ran to her.

"Need a girl, mam? Need a girl?" Her eyes were wide and cloudy, her lips distended in an artificial smile, her head lifted back almost coyly.

The colored women shifted on their boxes, leaning forward, glaring angrily at Elvira.

Inez rose, tugged at Elvira. "Siddown," she growled. "She know you wanna work. Siddown, an' let her pick, herself."

Elvira whirled and struck at Inez's hand, her face savage. Then she turned back to the white woman, soft and smiling. "I'm a good worker, mam. Anythin' you want. Wash, iron, clean windows . . ."

The white woman was troubled. It had never been this way before. She looked frantically down the line, feeling a sudden fear and embarrassment, hoping to see a familiar face, a girl she had used before. Then she would be able to call her by name, call her out of the line, and get away from this sharp-eyed, grinning girl. She knew, vaguely, that it would be unfair to take this girl with her, giving the others no chance. She felt the anger on their faces, and she flushed uncomfortably as passers-by turned to stare at the black girl jabbering at her.

"Anythin' at all, mam, wash, iron, scrub floors, wash windows, anythin' at all, whatever you say, I'm the best worker . . ." High and shrill, over and over again, without let-up.

Suddenly the white woman lost the last shred of her assurance, was possessed by a frantic desire to escape. "No, no," she managed to say, taking a step backwards. "I'm not looking for no girl."

But Elvira stopped her, putting her hand on her shoulder, smiling brightly. "Sure, mam. Take me, mam. I'll shine up you house, mam."

The woman stared at Elvira a moment, then nodded helplessly. "All right. Come on."

But before she could turn, loud voices rose in protest.

"Wait a minute! How much you payin'?"

The woman looked at the dark faces, breathing heavily. The panic which had seized her a moment before passed as suddenly as it had come. She was sure of herself now. She had the money. She had the job they all wanted. What kind of a fool had she been to let that skinny little black girl upset her so!

A voice whined out of the line, meek, humble.

"How much you payin', mam?"

"Whatever it is, I'll go!" screamed Elvira.

The white woman stood more firmly, not yet deigning to answer, her silence an insolent response to both the challenge and the plea.

Inez stood up, solid and bold. She pushed Elvira aside and confronted the white woman. "We don' work for less'n thirty cents an hour. None of us does!"

The woman smiled, her lips lifting from her teeth. Then, slowly, quietly, she spoke. "Who'll go for twenty-five?"

"Me!" barked Elvira, scratching at Inez. "I'll go for twenty-five!"

"Twenty, mam," came the whining voice from the line. "Twenty cents an hour, mam, ef you say."

Elvira spun around on the old woman. "Who you tryin' to bitch!" she spat. "I'll . . ."

The white woman pushed in front of Elvira, calculated the old woman with shrewd probing eyes, smiled. "Will you wash for that, too?"

Inez, her lips pressed hard together, strode to the white woman. "You heard me say we don' work for less'n thirty!"

"I ain't talking to you," the woman said. "Don't get fresh with me or I'll call a cop, you hear?"

The old woman rose from her box, smiling, nodding her head. "Twenty cents is fine, mam. Do anythin' you want, mam. Yessum, for twenty."

Another woman rose, farther down the line, and hurried to the little group. "I'll take fifteen, missus!" she yelled. "Fifteen!"

"Goddam!" Inez cried. "May de Lawd tear de tongue outta yo' haid! Didn' we make up nobody goes for less'n thirty? Didn' we make up no more slave market auctionin' here!" She shrieked. "Didn' we swear to stick together on this! Damn you missuble souls, the whole damn bunch of you, you'd suck the blood outta you mother's heart, you dumb black bastards so blind you caint see the dirty knife that's slicin' you down like ham in a slicin' machine!"

The white woman turned on her furiously. "You shut up," she shouted. "I know your kind. Communist! I'll call the cops in a minute, so help me God!"

Inez set her tough hands firm on her wide hips, spread her heavy legs, took her stand in front of the white woman. "Nobody goin' with you for less'n what I say!" she shouted, her huge breasts heaving.

"Say you want to work," sneered the white woman. "Then you won't take it when it's offered to you. Just rather suck on relief, let the taxpayers support you! We know your kind. Lazy, shiftless, no good. All of you. What could anybody expect from a nigger!"

Sister Susy and three other women got up quickly, forming a tense semicircle behind Inez.

"I'm ready to come, missus," quavered the old woman. "Don' pay no mind to whut she say."

"Old Widder, you a fool," yelled Inez. "You ain' goin' noplace not effn I got to stop you with my own hand! Not less'n you get paid proper!"

The woman in back of Inez nodded. They stared resentfully at the white

woman. "It's got to stop," Sister Susy whispered. "It's jes' got to stop. I've seen the days when we's knocked down to ten cents an' less, an' that's jes' got to stop."

"Whyantcha mind you own business?" scolded the woman who was willing to work for fifteen. "I'll work for whatever I want. It's a free country. Down in Wash'nton, D. C. they got a Consteetootion to prove it!"

The white woman stirred. Her shoulders twitched as if she had a chill. She moved restlessly. "I changed my mind," she said. "I changed my mind, and I don't need no girl today!"

"No! No!" screamed Elvira. "Take me, missus! Whatever you want to pay!"

The white woman couldn't get away. On one side stood Inez, Sister Susy, and three other women. On the other side were Elvira, the old woman, the woman who was willing to work for fifteen, and some others. They formed a solid semicircle in front of the woman, crowding her back toward the wall of the building.

"Once and for all!" Inez cried out. "Anyone go with this here woman for less'n thirty, she gonna find two empty holes in her haid where her eyes is now, and she ain' gonna have hair lef' on her haid by the time we's through with her! I'm tellin' you once an' for all!"

She raised her heavy hands threateningly. Her eyes bulged with fury.

The white woman was afraid. Her eyes blurred. The circle of dark faces around her fused together into one scowling mask, thick and heavy, pressing toward her. Panic choked her. "Police!" she shouted. "Police! Help! Police!"

The colored women shrank back as if the words were razors. There was complete silence for a moment, silence filled with fear, with shock, with the paralyzing need to escape. Even the white woman seemed surprised. Her eyes looked empty, her hands hung limply at her sides, the veins stood out on her forehead. She was sweating and panting. She breathed deeply, nervously, and looked about her. Her eyes were glassy with anxiety.

"Lawd, Lawd," moaned a colored woman, trembling, as she sat down on a box.

Elvira was standing like a marionette, taut and stretched. "My mother's sick an' dyin' home in baid." She addressed no one.

The white woman took a step away from her.

The colored women were looking anxiously up and down the street, but no policeman was visible.

Some curious housewives were standing across the street, listening eagerly, chewing gum very fast.

One said, "Them damn niggers!" The others nodded

The white woman took another step away from the colored women, moving cautiously, as if afraid that a quick movement would bring them springing after her.

"Lawd, Lawd," someone sighed.

The colored women down at the end of the line rose from their boxes, whispering darkly to each other, and walked away toward the subway station, their backs stiff, their eyes averted.

The white woman took several steps, first slowly, then faster, and then she was hurrying down the street, almost running, but unable to stop herself from looking back, fearfully, every few steps.

The small group of curious housewives began to disperse. "You can't tell what the world is coming to these days," one of them said. The others nodded and went away.

Inez, Sister Susy, and the others sat down on their boxes again. There was a brooding, funereal air about them, a look of perplexed anger on their faces. They made no sound.

Elvira was still standing on the sidewalk looking after the white woman, who had turned into the hallway of the yellow apartment house. Then, as if the strings were cut, she sagged, went limp, and began to cry.

"You c'mere, baby," Inez called softly. "You damn fool kid. See whut you started. C'mere an' siddown by me."

Elvira moved over to her and buried her face in the older woman's breast.

"Go 'head, baby," Inez crooned. "You got plenty to cry about."

J. PATRICK BYRNE:

Flown

That pliant jess I wrought with subtle twist,
And hood of softest leather—mildewing there;
From those live heights you scale, those winds you range,
I am leashed back, nor follow where you dare.

Yet once, you wheeled, an instant came to wrist,
All your wild vivid Gaelic beauty stilled:
This alien hill I hate then knew such change—
Ben Edair's heathery slope—and this tame air
Sea-tanged; neap tide, my heart and Liffey filled.

DESMOND POWELL:

Wolfe's Farewells

THOMAS WOLFE: *You Can't Go Home Again.* Harpers.

You Can't Go Home Again proves that you can go home—proves indeed that if you are an artist like Thomas Wolfe it is the only place you can go. In this book Wolfe bids farewell to many things: to his youth and the madness of his youth; to love, which is not enough; to fame, which is enough only so long as it is not won. He bids farewell to the friends of his adolescence, who have grown away from him; to the literary acquaintances of his young manhood, whose language has lost all meaning; to the greatest man he ever knew, his editor, whom he feels he must leave for reasons he does not define. He bids farewell to England, that tight little isle whose riddle he never solved, the riddle of how such a people could ever produce such a literature. He bids farewell to Germany, land of sorcery and dark enchantment, which so long laid its spell on his soul. And he bids farewell to Old Catawba, to his family, to the memories and images that flooded his first two books. He ends with a haunting passage in which he seems to say goodbye to life itself.

Most of this must be taken as symbolic of the giving up of an attitude that the artist feels he has outgrown. The last farewell, however, reads like a genuine premonition, one of those nudges which the distressed body (Wolfe was a sick man long before he contracted pneumonia in Seattle) gives the spirit, saying, "My friend, all is not well with us." At times, too, it seems as if Wolfe were bidding goodbye not only to the literary approach of his former books but to the literary material as well. There is a note of finality in the way he takes leave of many of his people; it is as if he were saying, "I have done all I can with you; I shall not deal with such as you again." It is quite true that Wolfe had done some things enough. For example, he had carried his analysis of the English about as far as it could go; he had exhausted the possibilities of conversation of the "Who, dat guy? No, duh udduh guy" type among the man-ciphers of the city pavement; he had said all he had to say about literary esthetes and producers of slim volumes of verse. He may even have used up the device of the train journey; at any rate he never again equalled his first treatment of it in *Of Time and the River.* The formula he had used twice, that of the small town boy leaving home, plunging into the city, struggling for fame, fleeing to Europe and returning again, had probably served its turn. There was ample reason, therefore, why Wolfe should feel that the time for a fresh start was at hand, and such a start he virtually promises us at the conclusion of this book.

Thomas Wolfe was a genius. He usually wrote well, even when he wrote too much. It would have been possible for him to forsake much of the stuff of which his first four books were made and still produce novels that, for energy

and variety, would be the envy of his fellow craftsmen. But whether such books, presumably written more objectively and out of the experience of his maturity rather than of his youth, would have evidenced the sweep and power of his first volumes is open to grave doubt. Wolfe once said in conversation that the experience of youth has a clarity and completeness that more recent experience generally lacks, and that one of the perils that beset the writer is the danger of using up this material too soon. If Wolfe *had* used it up it is hard to see what he could have put in its place, for on the evidence before us it seems certain that Wolfe was at his best when writing about his Carolina past.

You Can't Go Home Again illustrates this contention very well. One has only to compare the first two sections of the book to make the point clear. "The Native's Return," which deals with people and events in Libya Hill, has an ease and strength which the New York episode called "The World that Jack Built" largely lacks. One reviewer has called the party at the Jacks a "momentous incident." Momentous or not, it is a very dull party, which is in no way saved from failure by the literary arson Wolfe commits at the end. Wolfe puts more interest in a Libya Hill realtor than in all the plausible but boring society women, bankers, and theatrical people who crowd the Jack apartment; more truth in Nebraska Crane than in Piggy Logan or Mr. Hirsch. It is hard to see why the Jacks were brought into this book at all. Mrs. Jack's affair with George Webber was fictionally finished in *The Web and the Rock*. Nothing is gained by having it peter out here like a wet firecracker. It would have been better had Wolfe left it out altogether and devoted the pages thus gained to Elsa, who is dismissed rather cavalierly at the end of the book. One suspects that these affairs are presented as they actually happened, and that Wolfe was not yet objective enough to give them a new proportion dictated by fictional necessity.

Wolfe's other books bear out the contention that the farther he got from his Carolina past, the less vivid his characters became. Many pages of *Of Time and the River* are devoted to Starwick; we are told over and over again that here is the most fascinating creature that ever lived. Actually Wolfe presents a wavering and distasteful fellow whom no one would particularly want to know. Beside Ben Gant, who is etched in gold, Starwick is a blur. Beside Old Man Gant, who is hewn from solid rock, Starwick is a will-of-the-wisp that the reader never grasps. Old Man Gant may be a monster, as some have implied. But what a monster! What a complete, full-bodied, solid, enduring monster! How you can see him, touch him, smell him, know him! Even at the moment of his death he bestrides his narrow world like a colossus. There is no equal to him in Wolfe's later work.

One must admit that the chapter on Lloyd McHarg, in *You Can't Go Home Again*, might be quoted to disprove that statement. McHarg is a remarkable creation; unlike Foxhall Edwards, he is wholly satisfying whether the reader knows his original or not. I do not think him as important as Ben, or Eliza, or Old Man Gant; but he is an achievement of which any writer might be proud. What impresses me most about him, however, is that he, the most successful

of all the characters in the book, is the only one who resembles Old Gant. And that fact leads to the further recognition of the fact that whenever Wolfe creates a memorable character out of material other than that of his youth, that character is likely to bear a family resemblance to Gant. Think of Seamus Malone, of loyal Abe Jones, of the Rhodes Scholar Fried, all of whom possess some of the intensity, the wildness, the gift for vituperation of the old man. Think of Monk Webber himself, who in his passion and madness is Gant's own son. Wolfe spoke true when he said that his life was a search for a father; and he found his image in strange places.

It is significant that Wolfe does not say goodbye to one body of material. That is the story of an author writing a book, which he told three times in *The Web and the Rock, The Story of a Novel,* and *You Can't Go Home Again.* This would continue to be his own story as long as he lived, and out of the stuff of his own experience his novels had to be made; to this material he could not say goodbye. No doubt writers would continue to be interested in the account of his struggle with the problem of finding a language for his thought, but it is a fair question how long this struggle would continue to interest the general reader. I believe that Wolfe was greatest when writing of his youth, because the world in which he moved as a youth was not only a more vivid but a more varied world than the one he moved in as a man. *Look Homeward, Angel* is the tale of a small town, its pages swarming with sharply defined men and women: merchants, artisans, teachers; policemen, saloonkeepers, prostitutes; doctors, lawyers, housewives. We have here a picture of America, of all the elements that draw sustenance from its earth. *You Can't Go Home Again* is a tale of two continents; with such terrain full dealing is impossible. Because he had cast his lot in with theirs, Wolfe chose as his characters writers and men connected with the business of writing: Hauser, McHarg, Edwards, Stoat, Lewald, and Reade. He takes it for granted that these people will have the same validity as the people of Altamont. As a consequence of this acceptance of literary men as literary material he devotes to the flaying of an unimportant maker of puppet plays the chapter he might have given to an old Civil War veteran of Brooklyn; he forgoes telling us about a beautiful woman in order to tell us about a German literary agent; he wastes words satirizing literary fads which his readers, if they ever heard of them, have long since forgotten. All is not loss: "The Hollow Men" is one of his finest flights of imagination; but it gets into the book because it is conceived as passing through the mind of Foxhall Edwards. These literary figures may be good of their kind, but their kind cannot have the wide appeal of the Gants and their neighbors.

It may be this concern with literary matters that is responsible for the greater restraint in style which is perceptible in this book. There are fewer unwieldy sentences in this book than in its predecessors. And there are fewer rhapsodic outbursts. When Wolfe deviated from incident and character in *Of Time and the River,* he deviated into poetry, or at least into soaring rhetoric. He still does so here, but such passages are fewer, shorter, and quieter. They are replaced by a more thoughtful treatment of the things George Webber sees in

the world about him. Whether one considers this a gain will depend on one's attitude toward Wolfe's purple passages.

I know the general objections that can be raised to writing of this kind, and I appreciate Somerset Maugham's satire of it in *Of Human Bondage.* I know too the specific objections that have been raised to the emotional outbursts of Eugene Gant: the too lengthy catalogues; the tendency, as Wolfe himself expressed it, "rarely to use less than twenty-one adjectives where four would do"; the return to the same themes in almost the same words more times than even the plea of *leitmotiv* can excuse. The first objection is just if the catalogues are no more than catalogues; but Wolfe's have sometimes the effect of incantations. The second objection strikes closer, but it does not quite hit the mark, for it applies less often to the rhapsodic than to the matter-of-fact passages. If one examines the dirge for October which opens the Telemachus chapter in *Of Time and the River,* he must agree that here is no uncurbed outpouring of a talent uncritical of itself; these repetitions are calculated, these adjectives are chosen for their cumulative effect. And they are chosen well. The third objection is valid insofar as it applies to the design of the novel as a whole. Wolfe admitted that he never found a pattern that satisfied him. Can we say that his indulgence in flights of poetic prose hindered his finding that pattern?

Someone once said that *The Return of the Native* was a Greek tragedy in prose, and this not very penetrating remark has been repeated ever since. When talking about the form of the novel we are usually misled by analogies of this kind. *Look Homeward, Angel,* despite Wolfe's rather contemptuous dismissal of it in *The Story of a Novel,* has a discernible structure. It is not the rigorous design of a canon or a sonnet; the pattern cannot be illustrated by a geometric figure like one of those puerile triangles we meet in textbooks on the classical drama. If one must have an analogy, he may say it is like a tree, with many leaves and branches all of which attach to the main stem. There may be rust on the leaves and fungi on the trunk, but everything somehow belongs to the tree. *Of Time and the River* does not have even so loose a design as this. The death of Eugene's father brings a great story to an end, and there is nothing of like fictional magnitude to take its place. I do not think, therefore, that one can accuse the prose poems of getting in the way of the form. In a large portion of *Of Time and the River* Wolfe simply did not have a story that hung together as did the story of the Gants. When they disappear from the plot, he is left with Eugene's journey through a strange world and his emotional reactions to what he meets there. He becomes prolix and diffuse, but in the course of telling us of these reactions he gives us some of the most glowing prose that has been written in America.

To say that this prose is uncontrolled because it is violent is an error; to say that this is the violence of impotence is one of the first critical errors of our time. The emotions of youth are violent, the acts of youth are uncontrolled, the unsatisfied desires of youth lead to beatings of the breast and feelings of futility. Thomas Wolfe knew all these things and wrote them from his heart. The point is, he wrote them well. He expressed what he wanted to express.

The impression that these heightened passages leave is one of power. It is well to remember, too, that the majority of them are not turbulent. Besides the roarings of Old Man Gant, the ravings of Monk Webber, and the goat cries of young Eugene, there are the solemn chants on death and sleep, the nostalgic memories of lost days, the mighty panoramas of America, the dark meditations on time. Some disservice is done these passages by making them into anthologies. They belong in their context, from which they differ less in kind than in degree. They are the peaks of Wolfe's rhetoric, and one feels no such astonishment in meeting them as, say, he may feel in meeting the rhapsodic chapters in *The Grapes of Wrath.*

The virtues and defects of Wolfe's work result from the fact that he approached the novel as a poet, and moreover as a personal romantic poet. This may be the wrong attack for the novel. Mr. Thurber stated the objections to it when he admonished Wolfe for not laboring "over an idea until he cuts it down from 6700 sprawling words to the three paragraphs which will express it perfectly; that is, bring it within the definition of Art." Wolfe was probably more conscious of what he was trying to do than this would imply. The question is, could the thing he was trying to do in his long prose poems be done better by condensation? I doubt it; his attack resulted in some unique effects that no careful search for the *mot juste* could have achieved. It is clear, however, that Wolfe had taken criticism like this to heart, and there is evidence in *You Can't Go Home Again* that he was becoming more careful and more mature. This does not mean that he was becoming a better writer Pope was more careful than Shelley, and Coventry Patmore was more mature than Byron.

HARRY THORNTON MOORE:

"No Man Is an Island"

RAMON J. SENDER: *A Man's Place.* Duell, Sloan and Pearce.
RALPH BATES: *The Fields of Paradise.* E. P. Dutton and Company.
ERNEST HEMINGWAY: *For Whom the Bell Tolls.* Charles Scribner's Sons

The importance of the peasant in recent novels is not a Noble Savage glorification: rather it is a realistic understanding of the peasant that shows him, despite his grime and ignorance, as an essentially better man than his landlord. This was a poetic-romantic attitude with D. H. Lawrence, who originally rediscovered the peasant. It is a political situation to a body of later writers, particularly those who took part in the defense of Republican Spain. The latest novels by Ernest Hemingway, Ramon Sender, and Ralph Bates demonstrate how severely those writers' life-philosophies were affected by involvement in the conflict.

Ramon Sender, writing now in Mexico, casts a nostalgic backward look

upon his native Aragon. *A Man's Place* ranges between 1910 and 1926, the heyday of the last Spanish monarchy. It holds much of the beauty and the joys of simple living in the Spanish countryside. Sender knows how ruthless his own people can be, but he also knows their generosity and the proud, noble natures of the poorest of them. The eccentricities of his fellow-countrymen are dear to him: the boy-narrator and his cronies used to catch vultures in a boneyard and bell them—a pastime taken up by the next set of younger boys—so that when the birds of death fly overhead in this book, cowbells tinkle.

Sender's story, like Bates's, has something of the simplicity of a fable, and indeed the central character gives it an almost mythical touch. He is the least important man of the village: as a boy he gathered manure for fertilizer, and was often chided because he was too timid to beg; as a man he becomes desperate when he learns that his wife is a whore. Then "an idea takes him," and he disappears. Spanish justice tortures two poor devils into confessing that they killed Sabrino and fed his body to hogs; they are sent to prison. The town is thrown into turmoil, and the Liberal Party is unseated. Some fifteen years later, Sabrino is found by a posse sent out after a monster rumored to be in the hills. They bring him back, shaggy and bestial, more of a Ben Gunn than a Zarathustra, and once more this least of men has pitched the town into an uproar. Now it is the Conservative Party that is unsaddled. There are erotic disasters, the alcalde is wounded in a duel, farms and woodlands are burned.

How one little, apparently insignificant man can violently change the entire destiny of a group, of a community: that situation may also be found in Ralph Bates's *The Fields of Paradise*. The scene is not Spain this time, but Mexico. Yet it is curiously like that insouciant, pre-Republican Spain of Sender's book: the peon vs. landowner set-up is quite similar. (In each story, incidentally, the town priest is essentially a good man, and in Bates's novel the padre defends the peasants' rights in a controversy with a Canon who represents the reactionary side of the Church.) Bates's leading character is an itinerant fireworks vendor who comes to the remote and semi-feudal town of San Lorenzo, a place the revolution has not yet reached. Unlike Sabrino in *A Man's Place*, Felipe is assertive, and it is his vigorous jailbreak that makes him a leader of the revolt at San Lorenzo, along with a former local leader who escapes with him. The story of that revolt is well worked out and excitingly written: what Bates has learned in Spain about people and incidents of this kind serves him well in the New World; his atmosphere in this novel, as well as his mythology and characters, is indisputably Mexican. Both he and Sender have written compelling stories of revolts against tyrannical authority and have illustrated them with types they love—those realistically seen, not too impossibly noble peasants. Based on history, insofar as history is what these writers know from their experience, the books are also in a way prophetic.

The writing of Ralph Bates and Ramon Sender, good as it is, pales to mere competence next to the burning glass of Hemingway. Even this last novel of his, which is perhaps only his third best—though in the contagious fever that sweeps through the host of reviewers when an obvious best-seller is

on deck, it has almost unanimously been called Hemingway's finest—even this not-quite-top-flight Hemingway outshines most other books of the last few years. Fiction lately has been in the doldrums: writers have been cramped by the expectation of war, and even more so by its actuality. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* stands out emphatically as a novel of high quality, though it is not so carefully written as Hemingway's earlier work, which introduced one of the great creative styles of our time. Looseness in some writers makes for strength, but Hemingway's power lay in compactness: he had welded for himself a mode of expression that was at once his own distinctive poetic idiom and the daily language of his contemporaries. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* lacks the sharpness and vividness of that earlier work. Hemingway's device for avoiding the four-letter words (which he accustomed a generation to seeing in print) is annoying: though he implies that Spaniards are untranslatably obscene, it would have been better to find blanks on page after page than such downright bad prose as "I obscenity in the milk of your obscenity" and similar phrases, repeated to distraction.

For Whom the Bell Tolls has, simply, been too uncritically received. It may seem trivial to object at such length, in such a short review, to these stylistic points. But they are symptomatic of much else that prevented this reviewer at least from finding in the book that quality the mind and sensibility always hope for and rarely find—that quality for which the word harmony (in its best sense) must serve. This story has too many flashbacks, the messenger caught in the jumble of the Loyalist advance doesn't seize the imagination as the hero of *A Farewell to Arms* did in the Caporetto retreat, and in the main what could have been an essentially straight and clear story loses in intensity because of the diffuseness in structure and writing. Yet with all these handicaps, the novel is without question one of the finest of these hectic days, and is an important artistic statement of the times. Hemingway's power comes through best in the love story that is intertwined with the young American's perilous mission to blow up the bridge in Fascist territory, that "bridge on which the whole future of the human race can turn" The Spanish girl Robert Jordan meets, and the outdoor love scenes at the edge of a pine-forest on icy nights, and the suspense when at last the day comes for the blowing up of the bridge—these are the greatest things in the book. One of the digressions is excellent and necessary: the gypsy woman's story of how the reactionaries in her man's town were made to run the gauntlet. This and the massacre of El Sordo and his men by the Fascist planes are done with that cold bloody cruelty of realism Hemingway has perfected.

Most of the people in this book are strongly sketched: here are unglorified but great-spirited peasants. And they all know the lesson of that magnificent passage of Donne's from which Hemingway takes his title: "No man is an island, entire of itself; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for

thee.'' The novels of Bates and Sender discussed here teach this lesson too, though less grimly. ''No man is an island''—we are dealing here with a wiser, more mature, and more compassionate Hemingway than we have known before, and that is persuasive compensation for the technical carelessness which prevents this from being a novel of greater magnitude.

ROBERT FITZGERALD:

Mr. Pound's Good Governors

EZRA POUND: *Cantos LII—LXXI.* New Directions.

Merely try to imagine Mr. Pound's *Cathay* being published in 1940 instead of in 1915, and you are well prepared for the study of these cantos. *Cathay* is a fine work of art, matchless of its kind, modest in its scope but probably definitive. Owning it, you need own no porcelains. Very good. The poet meanwhile has lived a quarter century; no one who has survived the same period can sensibly reprove the direction his interests have taken. In the first ten and I believe the best of these cantos, LII to LXI inclusive, he has attempted a rendering, not of certain poems of Rihaku or notes of Fenollosa, but of China's entire dynastic history from the third millennium before Christ to the eighteenth century A. D. A rendering: i. e., a poem making palpable the essentials of the subjects. The essentials: whatever in men, deeds, and policies casts light on the practice of wise government.

Anyone unfamiliar with the preceding cantos may get his footing fairly easily in Canto LII, which opens with a summary of the plight of Europe according to Pound. It is ''sin drawing vengeance,'' and the sin is *neschek,* a word that the active reader may be tempted to interpret (and half rightly) through the Latin *nescio* (i. e., as ''ignorance'') until the meaning becomes plainer in ''poor yitts paying for / . . . a few big jews' vendetta on goyim'' and is finally made explicit: ''of the two usuries, the lesser is now put down'' (i. e., in Germany and Italy, which have deprived private bankers of credit-control but not yet put down ''super-*neschek* of the international racket'') Furthermore, ''the groggy church is gone toothless / no longer holds against *neschek,*''—i. e., does not, as in the Middle Ages, condemn the taking of interest as a sin. After this little exercise in contemporary analysis and in Pound's methods of exposition, the reader is abruptly introduced to the poet's true values through a long and beautiful poem that is a sort of Chinese *Works and Days,* representing the hallowed observances of the seasons among an uncorrupted people. If Pound's ascription of our political ills to money-lending has seemed preposterous to the liberal reader, this passage should at least make him think again as to the poet's standards. Pound closes the canto with an adjuration: ''Begin where you are said Lord Palmerston / began draining swamps in Sligo / Fought smoke nuisance in London. . .''

All right. The good governors are those who begin where they are, who

act usefully for the well-being of the people. The next nine cantos, in which the good governors of China are plucked from the past and celebrated in their setting, constitute one of Pound's most sustained and fascinating stretches. For the reader who will keep his mind on the poem and perform his own cross indexing as he goes along, not much of it will remain finally obscure, nor will the asides and outriders of freely associated material distract him from the main drive. I imagine that there are two principal reasons for this coherence: the cantos pursue a chronological structure, and afterthoughts as to the English reader's need for enlightenment seem to have dictated many verses. Metrically the cantos are not only elaborate but rich in the saving imagery that Pound in other cantos has deleted or omitted with unfortunate results.

I am afraid that half at least of the second decade of cantos here published, LXII to LXXI, fall into that category. It is clear, orderly, appropriate, and interesting that these cantos should without prelude launch into the career of John Adams, which began mid-eighteenth century at precisely the period when Pound drops his Chinese, and that the space given to Adams should precisely equal that given to four millenniums of Chinese history. It is perhaps just that American readers should be presumed to know a great deal more about Adams and his contemporaries than about Kung-fu-tsu (Confucius). Certainly, "without knowing their actions / you know not what made us our revolution / *magis decora poeticis fabulis*. . ." Nevertheless, there are here long passages shuffled in chronology, composed wholly of snipped lines from Adams' letters, isolated curiosities of detail, cryptic contemporary references and a liberal use or implication of *et cetera*. These passages seem to me not merely arid but, in effect, perfunctory and thoroughly dull. More's the pity, because elsewhere the man and his time come through inimitably, supporting through the mouth of the Founder Pound's great hymn of hate: "I abhorred over our whole banking system / Every bank of discount is downright corruption / taxing the public for private individuals' gain / and if I say this in my will / The American people wd / pronounce I died crazy."

DAVID DAICHES:

Thomas in Weimar

THOMAS MANN: *The Beloved Returns: Lotte in Weimar*. Alfred A. Knopf.

Thomas Mann returns in this novel to a favorite theme—the genius and his relation to other personalities. "Novel" is perhaps hardly the right term, for the book is really a series of dialogues and monologues through which the author's conclusions are eventually made known. Charlotte Buff, one of Goethe's early loves and the main inspiration of *Werther*, returns in her old age, widowed and respectable, to visit the established celebrity at Weimar. Her attitude towards Goethe is one of mingled pride and resentment—pride

in the role she has played in his early life and work, resentment at the way he has exploited her and her husband for the sake of his art. After meeting and conversing with various members of the Weimar circle, and being made into something of a heroine by the Weimar celebrity hunters, she eventually meets Goethe—the first time in over forty years—first at a dinner party given by him for her, and for the second and last time more privately in the great man's carriage. In this final conversation Goethe explains the relation of genius to its victims in a mood of dignified yet benevolent martyrdom. Charlotte accepts the explanation and the reconciliation, and they part once more, this time for ever.

The theme, like most of Mann's, is an ambitious one. And the book fails as a unified and convincing treatment of the theme because of a certain cumbersome verbosity which, at least throughout the first half, clogs the machinery and badly interferes with the proper alignment of the story. The trouble is, Mann insists on taking up his characters one by one, holding them at arm's length and shaking their philosophy out of them at the slightest provocation: the characters are pumped each in turn, and the result is at the same time too pretentious and too neat to be convincing. Of course the characters open themselves only in order to shed light on Goethe, the presiding genius of Weimar whom sooner or later everyone in the book finds himself discussing. But the thing is done too much with the air of a stage electrician throwing the switches, or a puppet master making his dolls perform. And eventually the voice and accents of Thomas Mann intervene, taking the story impatiently out of the characters' mouths (though it is still nominally the characters who are speaking) and hastening on the dialogue to its proper subject. Charlotte arrives at the inn in Weimar and is immediately besieged by a series of visitors, each of whom sits with her for at least fifty pages discoursing about Weimar, Goethe, and the nature of genius with a surprising amount of insight and a great deal of hot-house psychology which convinces neither as objective truth nor as adequate revelation of the speaker's character. True, each speaker begins by talking very much in character—a little too obviously so, sometimes—but very soon the master takes control and his voice drowns out the others. Obviously, for what he had to say, the platonic dialogue, or something of the kind, would have been a much more adequate form. As it is, form and content are constantly fighting with each other. The book begins as a novel, then stops and turns into a philosophical dialogue, then proceeds as a novel again, and so on. To effect with success such a difficult combination of philosophical dialogue with fictional illustrations of the points made in the dialogue would require a deftness which Mann's genius was never the kind to accommodate. Dramatic dialogue like that used in Mann's "Fiorenza," for example, might have proved more suitable in *The Beloved Returns.*

Not all the difficulty is with the form. To enter into the consciousness of Goethe and show the Master's train of thought is a rash endeavor even for Thomas Mann, and Goethe's speculations while dressing—genius communing with itself—are rather too similar to the thoughts of Herr Mann while writing

about Goethe to be impressive or convincing. Admittedly, a certain joy in heavy language is common to both writers.

Some things are well done. The peculiar atmosphere of Weimar under Goethe's intellectual tyranny is admirably portrayed: the reader gains a real insight into that stuffy and sycophantic, yet withal brilliant and perhaps unique, court of culture over which the Grand Old Man of German letters presided with such consciousness of his own function both to his contemporaries and to posterity.

Both Herr Mann and the great Goethe are very self-conscious geniuses: Thomas in Weimar is accordingly too much at home to feel the need for discipline or restraint.

OTHER RECENT BOOKS:

VIRGINIA WOOLF: *Roger Fry, a Biography.* Harcourt, Brace and Company.

"In so far as taste can be changed by one man, it was changed by Roger Fry." Thus wrote Sir Kenneth Clark in his Introduction to Fry's Last Lectures. Mrs. Woolf's biography is a full-length portrait of the man who, in the first third of our century, did more than anyone else to destroy Philistinism and to attack sentimentality and mere representation. In their place he established the contemplation of form as the one constant, fundamental emotion we experience before works of art. Trained at Cambridge University for a scientific career, he learned to apply all the forces of scientific analysis to art criticism. The result was revolutionary.

Completely objective in her treatment, Mrs. Woolf fills in the pattern of Fry's early life: the strict discipline of his Quaker childhood, the waste of his years at school, the mellowing influence of Cambridge where he awoke to the spell of art and to the loveliness of the visible world, the impact of Italy and Italian painting, the tragedy of his marriage, and the discovery at last of his critical faculty.

He saw that his task was to achieve, through appreciation and interpretation, a more profound understanding of great imaginative creations, both old and new. He taught that "certain forms agree and our joy is not in the forms themselves, but in their agreement." The great battleground over which he fought for his theory was the Post-impressionist exhibition in London in 1910. Abused and ridiculed for his defense of Cezanne, Picasso, and Van Gogh, he hammered at the British public and the critics until he succeeded in making the world see what it had never seen before — that "content is merely directive of form and that all essential aesthetic quality has to do with pure form."

Fry may seem to us today curiously indifferent to social significance. The point is that he would accept social significance, provided we did not insist that the value of the idea determines the value of the form. Art, to him, was not so much the imitation of life as the discovery of a "new equivalent for life" in the "images which by the clearness of their logical structure and by their closely knit unity of texture shall appeal to our imagination."

The reader of Mrs. Woolf's other works will see that her novels are a beautiful expression in fiction of Fry's principles of art.

John Hawley Roberts

EDWARD MATHER: *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Modest Man.* Thomas Y. Crowell Company.

Hawthorne's half-buried life has been baffling to biographers, for they have suspected (not without reason) that the buried half was more significant than the open record. Accordingly most of the biographies are only partially valid. Edward Mather chooses to present him as "a modest man." The epithet is pleasantly free from journalistic and Freudian associations, but one may doubt if it is the best one. Modest Hawthorne unquestionably was as a person, but it is likely that his master trait was rather a deep-seated independence. He jealously guarded his privacy, and he was intensely individual. If you poked him up, this shy, silent man might

leap at you with fierce resentment. Inwardly he had a strong sense of his own worth and a certain contempt for the opinion of the world.

Despite his subtitle, Mr. Mather wastes no time pounding a thesis; he simply tries to get at what kind of man Hawthorne was personally. To the general reader the book will seem most original in the treatment of Hawthorne's ancestry. The scholar will find a few new data in the chapter dealing with Hawthorne in England. An Englishman, Mr. Mather has kept pretty well abreast of American scholarship; a close check would probably reveal few errors in fact, though there are some strange omissions in the bibliography.

The sympathy and admiration with which Mr. Mather generally writes of Hawthorne do not extend to Hawthorne's family and circle. Elizabeth Peabody is to him a tufthunter and a fantastic; Sophia is mediocre, humorless, and officious. The transcendentalists as a group seem a bit tarnished when he gets through with them. Alcott he does not appear to understand. Be that as it may, this is an interesting and urbane study, if not a very important one.

Alexander Cowie

HENRY W. WELLS: *New Poets From Old.* Columbia University Press.

Mr. Wells conveniently defines the intention of his book as follows: "This book aims to show the conservative elements in radical writers. It aims to make modern poetry more significant to those who have already enjoyed much of the older verse but have overlooked the common ground between the old and the new." Only English literature, and to a slight extent nineteenth-century American literature, are taken into account; classic and continental literatures are omitted from consideration. With the purpose, as he says, of avoiding the superficiality that goes with too-brief discussion, Mr. Wells has centered his discussion around (though not limited it to) twenty-odd contemporary English and American poets. These he uses as test cases, to indicate the fact (though not the extent) of influence of the old poetry, from the Anglo-Saxon period to the Victorian, on the technique, form, and spirit of the new.

The book is valuable chiefly as a corrective of the assumption, wherever that may still exist, that contemporary poetry is rootless and shows a total severing of communication with older literature. Part of the discussions of the heritage of technique and the heritage of spirit are solid and complete enough to be interesting and probably enlightening to most readers. The limitations of the book are obvious, and largely inherent in its plan: it is primarily expository, only slightly and incidentally critical; and it considers only one portion of the influence of the art and culture of the past upon the poetry of the present.

In the chapter concerning the heritage of form, Mr. Wells often does not avoid that superficiality resulting from too-brief statement which he himself mentions.

W. R. Moses

KENNETH FEARING: *Collected Poems.* Random House.
HOWARD NUTT: *Special Laughter.* The Press of James A. Decker.

The gathering of Kenneth Fearing's poems comes very appropriately at the end of the thirties, for, more than the work of any other American, they incarnate the spirit of English poetry in that decade and demonstrate its differences from poetry of the twenties. Whereas post-war poets allowed their antipathy to the ugly phases of contemporary life to drive them to despair and exile, poets of the thirties retained this antipathy, yet sensed that it was shared or should be shared by large blocks of the American people. They occupied themselves with sympathetic portraits of the oppressed, satire of the oppressors, programs for a healthier future. And to make the sharing easier, they abandoned—some more than others—the difficult diction and obscure allusions of the Eliot generation; they approached the people's language.

Fearing's contributions to periodicals during the late twenties and his first volume (1929) anticipated this shift in tone and technique. And all through the just-finished decade his was the voice speaking out most vigorously and influentially against corruption to a people who became more ready to listen because of the depression and the reform administration. He was concerned with more than just the surface vices, unemployment and war-mongering and exploitation and indifference to suffering; he gave equal attention to our patterns of empty daily activity, whether we be go-getter business executives, film-star idolators, or small-time gamblers, Dreamworld Doras or Delusion Dicks. In fact, "The Agency," a group of twenty hitherto unpublished pieces that concludes the collection, deals entirely with these

poor cogs in the crazy machine of metropolitan life—people who rely on gin, dreams, blondes in blue, or adjustment to their gods and their conventions to help them forget that their questions can't be answered, their dreams can't be realized, their doom can't be escaped.

These newest poems are structurally as sound as his already familiar ones, and just as hard and crackling in phrase—though less tricky, rhetorical, and explosive. A few are too prose-like; a few are too obviously re-statements of earlier themes. But in the main "The Agency" provides new support for Kenneth Burke's estimate of Fearing: "There is no contemporary poet who is neater at noting with ironic corrosion the grotesque injustice of our ailing economic structure."

Only a handful of the younger poets with Fearing's general purpose and accent have any real poetic gift. Perhaps the most skilful and eloquent among them is Howard Nutt, whose magazine appearances since 1932 have been so conspicuously and consistently good that his first book ought to be widely welcomed. Though, like Fearing, he was born and raised in Illinois and attended the state university for a time, he has resisted the lure of Manhattan and remained in Illinois. But despite his occasional treatment of prairie and village scenes, he is no regionalist. His subject is the pompous, feigning, sporting bourgeois, blind to others' wants and his own fate—wherever he may be found. Governor Piffle, who can say "So What?" to everything; Weary-Water Sue, so bored and so desired; the poet who sits under a sloping ceiling and manufactures forty ways to say "This pain I feel"; "philanthropists whose favors come / from rents collected in a slum"; the motley band of quacks and clowns who go dancing though the crystal floor is cracking—these are central in his portrait of America. And for background he sketches in, more heavily than Fearing, the poor who watch this masquerade and ask how long it will endure.

Instead of Fearing's long-lined free verse, Nutt employs terse, almost choppy lines, punctuated with daring Byronic rhymes and half-rhymes. The movement is jerky, irregular, but carefully planned, as artificial as Fearing's burlesque rendering of soap-box or radio oratory. But artifice belongs in the scheme of satire. It is an undercurrent of seriousness and unsentimental honesty in both poets that gives their writing body, permanence, and excitement, that sets them apart from dilettante mockers who do not care. These men care.

Kerker Quinn

CONRAD AIKEN: *And in the Human Heart.* Duell, Sloan and Pearce.

Try as one will, one cannot read these sonnets without constantly remembering Shakespeare's. Not that Mr. Aiken repeats either as lover or as poet the burden of Shakespeare's song; this is not echo poetry either in substance or in phrase. But love is love and time is its enemy, and Shakespeare's telling of their conflict in the riming quatrains and climactic couplet of the Elizabethan sonnet has been singing in our brains for now these three hundred years. The comparison is, therefore, inevitable and involuntary, and it forms the basis for one's satisfaction and disappointment.

First, on the debit side: for all the concreteness of expression the passion in these sonnets is abstract; the solution is illusory; the lovers, even in their ecstasy, are pitiful rather than triumphant. Colors and shapes — things great and small, from stars to dandelions — enrich the argument with imagery; yet for all that the lovers are anybody and, therefore, nobody, and love itself is a sort of Einstein equation. "Love's not time's fool," but here it escapes death by means of that perfect harmony in which life and death are indistinguishable. Between the ecstasy of "the winged race, Whose flight shall knit together time and space," and love that "bears it out even to the edge of doom" is all the distance between the springs of pity and those of tragic triumph.

Yet, here, when most poets have forsworn music, is poetry that sings — sings often with the subtle melody of the masters. Here is demonstrated again that the old poetic symbols still have power to move and that the true poet can new-mint them into phrases which bear the current date and convey the age-old stability of gold. The conceits and paradoxes recall the Elizabethans, not as echoes and imitiations, but with the permanent validity of true poetic language.

Paul N. Landis

JAMES T. FARRELL: *Father and Son.* The Vanguard Press.

Mr. Farrell here extends by six hundred pages his record of the O'Flahertys and the O'Neills. Danny O'Neill has now got through high school, and Jim, his father, is dead. An unpredictable expanse of material still lies ahead.

Constant readers of Farrell may anticipate their customary pleasure in his prose — as clear and honest as glass — tender, bitter, comic, brutal, full of tears, according

to the stuff that lies under it. The action of this volume, though, is comparatively tame. Peg O'Flaherty and Lizz O'Neill, those magnificent rowdies of No Star Is Lost, move toward the background and give place to Jim O'Neill, whose behavior inspires quite different feelings. His way of life, though pitifully cramped and short-visioned, must be admired; his slow death is rich in pathos. Mr. Farrell deliberately avoids the usual rough catharsis.

We cannot yet, of course, attempt to judge the whole Life and Times of Danny O'Neill; but in Father and Son, the present book of the series, Mr. Farrell has almost invited one kind of general comment by occasionally allowing the voice of Studs Lonigan to be heard. When that happens I remember that Studs Lonigan was a very great book, and I wish I were reading it instead of Father and Son. Studs was a heroic figure, a sulphurous rebel, fighting to impose his image upon a world he despised. His obstinate faith in himself, his headlong rush to destruction, and his pitiful surrender constitute a powerful tragic irony, an irony which provides the book its total structure. There is no such tension between the world and Danny O'Neill. Danny is not struggling much to be a great guy, but to be an average guy, one of the fellows. And unfortunately for the interest of the novel he appears to be succeeding: he rarely does anything strong or significant.

Mr. Farrell writes best when he is ironic — when he measures what a man really is against what he thinks he is or what he ought to be. He wrote thus of Studs and of Studs' father and, in this series, of Lizz and Jim and Aunt Peg and Uncle Al. But Danny, the central character, is too amorphous even to be clearly discerned, let alone measured and understood. I hope the next volume gets him licked into shape.

Charles Shattuck

WALTER VAN TILBURG CLARK: *The Ox-Bow Incident.* Random House.

This is a first novel, by an intelligent and able writer who would be well worth watching in the future. The scene of the book is Nedava or Wyoming, the time about 1885, the characters are cowboys, rustlers, stage coach drivers, saloon keepers, and the illegal deputy sheriffs of lynch law. These are the elements of the time-honored Western story, the same elements that made the fortunes of B. M. Bower and Zane Grey, but Mr. Clark is not primarily interested in action and has no concern at all for heroics.

Actually the story is valid beyond considerations of setting and time. Tetley, who leads the lynching party after three supposed rustlers and murderers, is only a representative of all sadistic torturers in power. Farnley, who touches off the pursuit and keeps it going when others would let it die, is the embodiment of unthinking hate. Most of the other characters are only followers, who, like boys, are afraid of being called cowards. Sparks, the Negro who had been a preacher, and Martin, who dies, are the only individuals who seem at all admirable. The reader finishes the book with the same feeling of tortured helplessness that one gets from reading accounts of Nazi or Fascist persecution; here, on a different scale, is the story of Silone's Fontamara, or Van Paassen's Days of Our Years.

In Mr. Clark's eye, most of us are Arts and Gils, who see the wrong and let it happen; only a few are even like Davies, who tried to fight and did not fight hard enough. This novel is based on an incident, but it is an incident not only of the West but of the world.

Keith Huntress

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER: *The Cat's Cradle-Book.* The Viking Press.

Cats — nineteen cats — not speaking English like the gifted Tobermory but living happily with a handsome young man who "understands and speaks cat" and is transcribing the cat folk lore "learned at their mother's tail." In a thirty-page introduction, the author tells of discovering this family in a mellow old English country house, and, because she too "understands cat," she is invited to stay for tea, for dinner, and for the night, and eventually she helps the handsome young man publish the following fables.

There are sixteen of them, most of them quite short. Some, to be sure, point the evil effects of avarice, curiosity, and other vices, but as a whole they bear out the young man's assurance that they have nothing "in common with the ordinary moral tales, the ordinary web-footed propaganda." They follow cat ethics, to mankind more relentlessly logical than properly orthodox. Nor can a mere human reader fail to note the obvious superiority of the animals and birds to men. The fox who would

not be pope, the mice who won Apollo, the phoenix, Odin's birds — all struggle with men and defeat them. And when a cat contests with men, in The Castle of Carabas, or opposes his point of view to man's, in The Traveller from the West and the Traveller from the East (strongly reminiscent of Swift's fourth tale of Gulliver) — then a fine implicit contempt raises the triumph to a superb disdain.

The style is the cat, too — objective, cool, and suave. The sharpest claws are cushioned in deceptive softness; the most wicked barbs are hidden in a wide-eyed ingenuousness that is worthy of Cabell.

Leah F. Trelease

OLIVE B. WHITE: *Late Harvest.* The Macmillan Company.

Catholic martyrs to the Faith are again treated by Miss White in her second novel, though here Tudor tyranny is aimed not at high officers of state such as Sir Thomas More but at the lesser Catholic gentry. Even their loyalty to Elizabeth as temporal sovereign and their fidelity during the Spanish descent upon England in 1588 do not save the Collingridges and the Winbournes from the slowly mounting but severe oppression of Walsingham and the Cecils. Burdened by the tax of the Recusant Rolls, imprisoned without definite charge, scattered and exiled, they reach a temporary period of peace only upon the accession of James I.

Miss White is at her best in the portrayal of the spiritual resources, the melancholy patience of those whom worldly power has occasion to persecute. Here, as in The King's Good Servant, her sympathetic characters are surprisingly mild, unselfishly kind, wholly good and noble. They are idealized types of the oppressed which might exist in any country and under any conditions of tyranny. The portrayal of their calm courage and melancholy dignity provides a moving commentary on an ever-recurrent lesson, the patient defense of a secure faith. Miss White's theme is of greater significance to her than its historical or accidental embodiment.

W. McNeil Lowry

JOSEPH VOGEL: *The Straw Hat.* Modern Age Books.

If you've read Heaven's My Destination, you'll know what I mean about The Straw Hat. It could have been superb. The characters often are. Uncle Gus, for instance, is almost the typhoon the blurb makes him out to be. His company is good — Mopardo, Lucy, Marlene, whose life in violence in the rainy death of an amusement park while they wait for the sun will be as real in its unreality to most readers as it is to the young innocent, Vincent.

Yet the novel is a disappointment. When Vincent finds a run-down carnival instead of the fashionable resort he has expected to visit, the education of a Simplicissimus should have begun. Vogel meant it to, but it doesn't. Too many threads are tied together only intellectually. Vincent is a stick, the least alive character in the book. He doesn't learn; he wanders about among characters to whom he is as genuinely incidental as he constantly feels — among characters who have run away with the author's basic plan. The conflicts are always coming to nothing; the ending, which should have completed Vincent's education, descends to the level of a gory justification of Gus's thick skull.

With Vogel's writing skill and his success in creating vigorous, racy characters, The Straw Hat should have been more than the piece of entertaining fiction it is. Still it is highly readable and frequently penetrating.

Thomas Bledsoe

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